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CHARLES NIRDLINGER

THE FIRST LADY
OF THE LAND



A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

WALTER H. BAKER & Co., BOSTON

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No. 5 Hamilton Place, Boston, Massachusetts

The First Lady of the Land

The First Lady of the Land

A Play in Four Acts

By

CHARLES FREDERIC NIRDLINGER

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BOSTON

WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

1914

The First Lady of the Land

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

(As cast in the original production at the Gaiety Theatre, New York, December 4, 1911, and later at the Fulton Theatre.)

JAMES MADISON, <i>Congressman from Virginia; afterwards Secretary of State in Thomas Jefferson's cabinet</i>	- -	Lowell Sherman.
AARON BURR, <i>Senator from New York; afterwards Vice-President of the United States</i>	- -	Frederick Perry.
BOHLEN PINCKNEY, <i>the President's Secretary</i>	- -	Regan Hughston.
SIR ANTHONY MERRY, <i>British Minister at Washington</i>	- -	William Hawtrey.
DON CARLOS MARTINEZ, <i>MARQUIS D'YRUJO, Spanish Minister at Washington</i>	- -	William David.
MYNHEER VAN BERCKEL, <i>Minister from the Netherlands</i>	- -	Carl Hartberg.
LOUIS ANDRE PICHON, <i>Chargé d' Affaires for France</i>	- -	John Prescott.
JENNINGS, <i>servant at Dolly Todd's; later at Madison's</i>	- -	Luke Martin.
DE VAUX, <i>Major-Domo at White House</i>	- -	Francis Bonn.
THE COOK	- -	Lawrence Windom.
THE HAIR-DRESSER	- -	Edward Stewart.
DOLLY TODD, <i>afterwards Mrs. James Madison</i>	- -	Elsie Ferguson.
SALLY MCKEAN, <i>afterwards Marchioness D'Yrujo</i>	- -	Beatrice Noyes.
MRS. SPARKLE	- -	Maud Hosford.
SOPHIA SPARKLE, <i>her daughter; afterwards Madame Pichon</i>	- -	Helen Bond.
LADY MERRY	- -	Rose Coghlan.
THE HONORABLE ENA FERRAR, <i>Lady Merry's sister</i>	- -	Heien Macbeth.
VROU VAN BERCKEL	- -	Myra Brook.
MINISTER FROM RUSSIA and COUNTESS DASHKOFF	} <i>Silent figures in Act III.</i>	
MINISTER FROM TURKEY		
CLOTILDE, <i>maid at Dolly Todd's</i>	- - - - -	Georgette Passadoit.
FOOTMEN, VALETS, SERVANTS, ETC.		



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As author and proprietor

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1914
MAIN

To
K. H.

F. 350

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

(As cast in the second production, at the Pitt Theatre, Pittsburgh,
January 12, 1914.)

JAMES MADISON	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Robert Bleeker.</i>
AARON BURR	-	-	-	-	-	<i>William Bonelli.</i>
BOHLEN PINCKNEY	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Louis Kimball.</i>
SIR ANTHONY MERRY	-	-	-	-	-	<i>George Riddell.</i>
DON CARLOS MARTINEZ, MARQUIS D'YRUJO	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Wilson Day.</i>
LOUIS ANDRE PICHON	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Allan Reese.</i>
MYNHEER VAN BERCKEL	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Richard Dix.</i>
DE VAUX	-	-	-	-	-	<i>William Crookshanks.</i>
JENNINGS	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Maurice Shane.</i>
THE COOK	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Franklin Trosh.</i>
THE HAIR-DRESSER	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Orme Millar.</i>
LADY ANGELA MERRY	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Louise Rial.</i>
DOLLY TODD	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Mary Hall.</i>
SALLY MCKEAN	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Nora Lamison.</i>
MRS. SPARKLE	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Louise Fraser.</i>
SOPHIA SPARKLE	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Clara Ayneston.</i>
THE HONORABLE ENA FERRAR	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Dorothy West.</i>
VROU VAN BERCKEL	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Lois Miller.</i>
CLOTILDE	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Olga Englebret.</i>

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The First Lady of the Land

THE FIRST ACT

SCENE.—*The parlor of the boarding-house kept by DOLLY TODD, in Philadelphia—at that time the Capital of the country. A spacious, oblong room. Double doors at back lead to the entrance hall, with a part of its mahogany staircase, and the hanging lantern, in view of the audience. Under the staircase, at right, a deep bow window, with window-seats, and flowers, looks into garden, where ice-clad trees glisten in the sunlight. At left of room, brick mantel, with fireplace. Above the mantel a mirror. At right of room, a spinet; door at either side. The scene, in color and furnishing, though typical of the period and place, avoids the chill and barrenness that usually characterize Colonial stage-settings. Some of the furniture is rather handsome and costly, recalling the “better days” of DOLLY’S people. And there are some French “touches,” suggesting the lively spirit beneath DOLLY’S sober attire.*

At rise of curtain and some seconds before, a fiddle is heard as through the wall of adjoining house. The tune, the familiar Horn-Pipe, is played repeatedly; the first part rapidly, the conclusion long drawn out.

SIR ANTHONY MERRY seated at table, left, is writing a letter. Without looking up, he growls, "Stop it!" at the fiddle-playing. A second later, looking towards the annoying music, he shouts: "Stop it, I say—stop it!" Resumes writing; then taps bell on table, rises, goes to wall at fireplace, pounds on wall vigorously, shouting very quickly: "Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!" JENNINGS, a negro, appears at door back, carrying MERRY'S top-coat, beaver and cane.

MERRY.

[Angrily; indicating fiddle-playing.] At it again—next door—that fiddle-scraping!

JENNINGS.

Yes, Sir Anthony. [Comes down.]

MERRY.

Did Mrs. Todd inform the tavern-keeper I find it most annoying?

[Crosses to table; "sands," folds and seals letter during ensuing dialogue.]

JENNINGS.

Yes, sir. He begs Mrs. Todd's boarders keep their patience till election's over.

MERRY.

"Election" ? What's that to do ?

JENNINGS.

Well, sir, that fiddle-scraping is Mr. Thomas Jefferson.

MERRY.

[*Amazed.*] Jefferson! The man they want to make President!

JENNINGS.

Yes, sir.

MERRY.

[*Rather to himself.*] Good gad! What a country!

JENNINGS.

[*Helping MERRY into his coat.*] Yes, sir.

MERRY.

See if Colonel Burr's gone out.

JENNINGS.

Some time ago, sir, and begs you'll find him in the Hall of Congress.

[*MERRY moves to exit. Enter PINCKNEY from hall. He is, judging from his dress, speech and manner, a mere fop and dandy; a typical "beau" of the period. His clothes, in cut and color, suggest at a glance the "Incroyable" of the Directoire. His speech, though savoring of affectation, is that of a man of cleverness and elegance. And beneath all the tokens of foppery there is a note of strength and subtlety.*

PINCKNEY.

Sir Anthony Merry?

MERRY.

[*Nodding assent.*] Mr. — ?

PINCKNEY.

Pinckney—a fellow-lodger; formerly of the Legation at Paris, with Mr. Jefferson.

MERRY.

[*Indicating the fiddle-playing.*] This gentleman—so Mrs. Todd said. Did he do that in Paris?

PINCKNEY.

Only when troubled—as he is now, by the election.

MERRY.

Any hope of—relief?

PINCKNEY.

No sign! I'm just from the Congress and they're as far as ever from choosing a President.

MERRY.

Good gad! [*Enter CLOTILDE, a trim-looking quadroon. She takes carafe, glasses, etc., from table and exits.*] I'm awaiting Lady Merry any day. She'd never put up with this. The landlady must find some way to stop it—if Congress doesn't.

PINCKNEY.

Congress has been voting the night through, and always the same result as for months past: seven states for Mr. Jefferson, seven for Mr. Burr, and one, New Jersey, for John Adams.

MERRY.

And what, in the end, will New Jersey do?

PINCKNEY.

Oh, no foretelling that, sir! New Jersey is liable to do anything.

MERRY.

[*Indicating fiddling next door.*] So this may continue indefinitely?

PINCKNEY.

But I'm sure you've only to apprise Mr. Jefferson that his fiddling disturbs you—and, at least, he'll change his tune.

MERRY.

Thanks, I'd rather change my lodgings than ask favors of Mr. Jefferson.

JENNINGS.

[*Announcing.*] Miss McKean.

[*Enter SALLY MCKEAN; young, very pretty, and dressed in the extreme fashion of the period.*]

SALLY.

[*To JENNINGS.*] Tell Mrs. Todd I'm here.

MERRY.

[*To JENNINGS.*] And—[*to SALLY*] if you'll allow—say I beg word with Mrs. Todd 'fore leaving. [JENNINGS *exits.*]

SALLY.

[*To PINCKNEY.*] Is Mrs. Todd much hurt?

PINCKNEY.

[*Puzzled.*] Hurt?

SALLY.

She sent for me urgent. And Clotilde said she had met with an accident.

PINCKNEY.

Oh! Then it was Mrs. Todd!—They were telling at the wax-works last night of a lady thrown from her horse, near the Hall of Congress, dragged for blocks, trampled on, and carried home on a litter by half a dozen Senators with broken limbs. [SALLY and MERRY *disconcerted*.] The lady's—I mean.

SALLY.

[*With gesture of "no."*] Mrs. Todd isn't riding horse these days.

MERRY.

[*With meaning*.] And Colonel Burr would certainly have told me of anything so serious to our hostess.

[*Enter DOLLY TODD. She is little more than twenty years old; wears the prim, conventional garb of a Quaker widow, with a gay-colored neckerchief that heightens the pearly white and delicate rose-tint of the complexion that was her chief beauty.*

DOLLY.

[*With courtsey*.] Gentlemen!—Sally!

DOLLY.

[*To MERRY*.] Thee sent for me?

MERRY.

Delighted to find you recovered from your misadventure.

DOLLY.

A mere trifle.

MERRY.

It seems, ma'am, this fiddle-scraping may go on for weeks!

DOLLY.

I've just writ Mr. Jefferson himself—to say he plays so sweetly, it gives some of my lodgers melancholy—so thee may be leaving—and that I'd grieve to lose so charming a patron.

MERRY.

[*Conciliated.*] Not so much I, ma'am! 'Tis only if Lady Merry arrives. She's all nerves—and if this went on ——— [*Gesture of dismay.*]

PINCKNEY.

No fear! Mr. Jefferson, I'm sure, would deny Mrs. Todd nothing. [*The music ceases abruptly.*]

MERRY.

[*In tone of relief.*] Thank God!

DOLLY.

[*To PINCKNEY.*] And Mr. Jefferson—when next thee sees him.

MERRY.

May I have your company to the Congress, ladies? There's promise of a lively debate.'

DOLLY.

Thanks—but my mishap keeps me indoors to-day. Will thee be having friends to dinner?

MERRY.

No. I'm dining out to-day, at Mr. Alexander Hamilton's. [*Exit.*

PINCKNEY.

I'm rather sorry Mr. Jefferson stopped his ———
[*Gesture of fiddling.*

DOLLY.

But I'd have lost Sir Anthony!

PINCKNEY.

And his wife, too!

DOLLY.

Plain-spoken, he says.

PINCKNEY.

So he's usually sent to countries where she can't speak the language. We've had terrifying reports.

DOLLY.

[*Kindly.*] Perhaps they don't do her full justice.

PINCKNEY.

That's what we fear, ma'am.

[*Exit to room, L. Enter CLOTILDE; her speech is a mingling of French and English.*

DOLLY.

[*To CLOTILDE, glancing over some tradesmen's bills, and handing her the accounts and a purse.*]

The tradesmen's bills—pay them. Thee bought little at market.

CLOTILDE.

Oui, Madame—the English monsieur dine out—his servant announce.

DOLLY.

Yes, but Mr. Burr may have guests.

CLOTILDE.

He no dine home——

DOLLY.

Has he said so?

CLOTILDE.

Marie—I see in market—she tell me.

DOLLY.

“Marie”?

CLOTILDE.

[*Explaining.*] My sister, Madame, who serves the French lady.

DOLLY.

Oh, yes! Marie still with Madame Jumel?

CLOTILDE.

Monsieur Burr dine there to-day—an' Marie, she say ——

DOLLY.

[*Stopping her.*] Marie's a chatter-box.

CLOTILDE.

Oui, Madame, but only weeth her sister.

DOLLY.

Well, don't *thee* with *thy* sister !

CLOTILDE.

No, Madame.

[*Crosses to exit.*]

DOLLY.

[*Recalling.*] Clotilde, if a strange gentleman calls, I'm not at home.

CLOTILDE.

For lodgers, also ?

DOLLY.

Of course. No rooms vacant.

CLOTILDE.

But Monsieur Burr—go soon.

DOLLY.

Not till they choose a President. Maybe weeks.

[*Gestures dismissal.*]

CLOTILDE.

[*Persisting.*] To-day, Madame, 'lection finish. Marie hear at Madame Jumel's. Then Mr. Burr go to Jericho !

DOLLY.

[*Perplexed.*] Jericho ?

SALLY.

[*Sotto-voce.*] Mexico !

CLOTILDE.

Marie, she hear him tell Madame Jumel—an' Marie, she say ——

DOLLY.

[*Impatiently.*] Go 'long! And I forbid thee ever repeat gossip from Madame Jumel's.

CLOTILDE.

Oui, Madame. But Marie, she say —

DOLLY.

Allez!

[*Stamps her foot and winces. Exit*

CLOTILDE.

SALLY.

[*At fireplace, shaking snow from muff, etc.*] What's happened?

DOLLY.

[*Breathless with excitement.*] Well, my dear, I've been flirting—and hurt my ankle!

SALLY.

[*Pretending to be shocked.*] Hussy! And that's why you sent for me?

DOLLY.

No. I've been found out!

SALLY.

Oh! Now I'll sit down. [*Sits at table.*] Who found you out?

DOLLY.

I myself, I blush to own: and the gentleman, too.

SALLY.

Blushed?

DOLLY.

Found me out—discovered my immodesty.

SALLY.

No gentleman would say so!

DOLLY.

'Tisn't what he said—but did!

SALLY.

Ruffian!

DOLLY.

[*Sitting opposite* SALLY.] Now I'll tell thee just how it ——

SALLY.

[*Rising as if to go.*] Think you'd better?

DOLLY.

[*Seizing SALLY'S hand.*] I must tell some one. [*Portentously.*] My dear—the fellow—had—me—in—his—arms!

SALLY.

Not really!

[*Unbuttons wrap.*]

DOLLY.

Enough to take notice!

SALLY.

[*Interested.*] Where? Where?

DOLLY.

On the pavement. In full public. He—picked me up!

SALLY.

You mean ——?

[*Takes off her neck-wrap.*]

DOLLY.

[*With growing agitation.*] Now, I don't expect thee to believe this. For 'tis just the sort of tale a lady always relates to explain some agreeable disaster!—I'd been to Meeting-house for Wednesday prayer—since my widowhood I've been most pious.—When I came 'way, 'twas snowing to blind one.—I chose my steps carefully—what with the wind and these abominable high French heels—and went without mishap 'til I turned into Chestnut Street. Just when I'd cross, by the Hall of Congress, a horseman loomed in front. I drew back, in a panic—my heel slipped—and—thank heaven, I had on my best stockings!

[*Shows them.*]

SALLY.

To prayer-meeting!

DOLLY.

Always—on a windy day! When I came to, I felt an arm about my waist. Oh, I *felt* it! And some one leaned over, his face so close to mine I saw the very color of his eyes. Blue, a beautiful blue!

[*Lost in pensiveness.*]

SALLY.

[*Recalling her.*] Yes?

DOLLY.

In a flash, I realized 'twas some one I'd seen before. He helped me to my feet.

SALLY.

[*Quizzingly.*] Arm still about you?

DOLLY.

[*Eagerly and naively.*] Well, that I can't recall. I've tried to—earnestly—but I was that ———
[*Business of "rattled."*]

SALLY.

Pretty fellow?

DOLLY.

[*Ecstatic.*] Oh, beautiful! Like a young French abbé—on a fan!

SALLY.

You must have been ——!

[*Repeats DOLLY'S gesture of distraction.*]

DOLLY

With scarce enough wit to thank him! Assured him I could get along without further assistance—tried to dismiss him, but he wouldn't have it—*insisted* I couldn't walk alone—that I had hurt my ankle. Said the word, too!

SALLY.

[*Pretending to be shocked.*] Jamais!

DOLLY.

Yes—right out—"ankle"!

SALLY.

The libertine!

DOLLY.

Bless thee, no! First-rate gentleman! [*Suddenly all smiles.*] Beautiful manners, almost shy. Scarcely spoke all the way home, and beautiful voice, too; low and gentle. [*Rather as*

if to herself.] I never realized what a pretty name Todd is, till he spoke it!

SALLY.

[In surprise.] Knew your name?

DOLLY.

[Nodding "yes."] And that I am freshly widowed. Spoke of it so beautifully. Such sympathy! *[Pensively.]* Faith! I never felt so consoled before!

SALLY.

[Interrupting.] Who *is* he?

DOLLY.

[Half hesitating.] I don't know.

SALLY.

You didn't ask his name?

DOLLY.

[With dignity.] Even a widow can be maidenly.

SALLY.

Well, my dear, if a man had me in his arms I'd want to know who he is.

DOLLY.

No! My ignorance is my sole excuse. As matters stand, 'twas an *accident*, liable to any lady—with flighty French heels; but one step further, 'twould become an *adventure*, for the gossip-mongers.

SALLY.

[Rising to go.] No fear!

DOLLY.

With Congress sitting? Town's a hot-bed of scandal. Let your foot slip ever so little, and your character hasn't a leg to stand on. [*The door-knocker heard in the hall. SALLY takes up her muff, and prepares to go.*] Thee's not going?

SALLY.

[*Nodding "yes."*] To view the wax-works with the Marquis.

DOLLY.

[*Confidentially.*] Settled?

SALLY.

[*Shaking her head "no."*] Um-um!

DOLLY.

Takes his time!

SALLY.

Not he—father.

DOLLY.

Why?

SALLY.

Something to do with your second-floor front.

DOLLY.

[*Startled.*] Colonel Burr?

SALLY.

He means to take Mexico from D'Yrujo's king. And if the Marquis can't stop him he'll lose his post here.

DOLLY.

[*Reassuring.*] Mr. Burr won't go to Mexico! Too far from Madame Jumel's.

SALLY.

Madame Jumel?—'Tis you he's after! And, Dolly, he's dangerous.

DOLLY.

[*Derisively.*] My eye and Betty Martin! How "*dangerous*"? He's never betrayed a friend, abused a foe, nor harmed a woman.

SALLY.

[*In half whisper.*] Good Lord! His reputation!

DOLLY.

[*Decisively.*] Warning enough for any lady who isn't courting trouble! These dangerous men wouldn't be half so dangerous if so many of us didn't try to find out why.

JENNINGS.

[*At door.*] Madame Sparkle's footman.

FOOTMAN.

[*At door.*] My lady's below, ma'am, with Miss Sophia, and if Mrs. Todd is disengaged, will leave her carriage.

DOLLY.

Beg her walk in.

SALLY.

I'll leave you.

[*Starts to go.*

DOLLY.

[*Stopping her.*] No, no!

[*Enter SOPHIA SPARKLE. Very young, not more than sixteen, buoyant, and sophisticated, despite her appearance of ingénue. She enters briskly, glancing back to see if MRS. SPARKLE is within hearing.*]

SOPHIA.

[*To DOLLY.*] I ran ahead to put you on guard. Something's amiss!

DOLLY.

[*To SALLY.*] I told thee! [*To SOPHIA.*] What is it?

SOPHIA.

Something in a letter—came this morning.

[*Enter MRS. SPARKLE, a portly woman; richly gowned; the grand-dame of the period. The younger women courtsey elaborately.*]

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*To SALLY.*] How do? [*To DOLLY.*] I thought to find you disengaged.

SALLY.

[*Reaching for her furs.*] Just taking leave, ma'am ——

DOLLY.

[*Seizing her furs, puts them out of reach.*] No, no—I've no secrets from Sally!

MRS. SPARKLE.

The morning post, my dear, brought me a most
[*searching in reticule*] interesting——

[*Brings out a letter with conspicuous seals.*

DOLLY.

[*Limp ; sotto-voce to SALLY.*] Laws! Stay by
me!

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Continuing.*]—and delicate communication—
from—Mount Vernon.

[*DOLLY and SALLY exchange smiles and
glances of relief.*

DOLLY.

Lady Washington?

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Reading from letter.*] Sends you expressions
of regard and affection, and wholly disapproves
your present mode of life!

DOLLY.

[*Shocked.*] Why!

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Giving her the letter.*] Read! [*Turns to
SALLY.*] Well, Sally, you going to marry the
Spanish Minister, D'Yrujo?

SALLY.

Hasn't *asked* me yet, ma'am.

MRS. SPARKLE.

He will, if I know your mother! Best catch
of the year. I'd have liked him for Sophia, only

I'd promised the French envoy, Pichon. What's he asking—the Marquis?

SALLY.

[*Puzzled.*] Why ——?

MRS. SPARKLE.

Dowry—what's he want?

SALLY.

Nothing!

MRS. SPARKLE.

Nothing? Aren't your folks uneasy? [*To DOLLY.*] Well, ma'am, what have you to say?

DOLLY.

[*Still looking at the letter.*] Thee wouldn't have me say it!

MRS. SPARKLE.

What! You're not honored! Let the girls hear!

DOLLY.

[*Reading.*] “While no accident of fortune could affect the high regard and deep affection in which I hold Mrs. Todd, nor lessen my lively appreciation of her excellent qualities, both of mind and heart, yet I cannot regard with indifference her present device of maintaining herself by the entertainment of strangers, be they of ever so high a quality, for a stated weekly emolument ——”

MRS. SPARKLE.

Mrs. Washington's polite, Christian expression for a boarding-house!

DOLLY.

Yes, I so took her meaning. But General Washington himself has lodged here; and I do now only as my mother did in her days of stress.

MRS. SPARKLE.

Thanks to your father!

DOLLY.

[*Bridling.*] Because fortune deserted him?

MRS. SPARKLE.

“*Desert*”——? He turned her out when he freed his slaves. Finest herd of blacks in the Old Dominion!

DOLLY.

My father held no honest man could keep slaves after the Declaration of Independence.

MRS. SPARKLE.

Mr. Washington kept his!

SOPHIA.

As for that, Ma', Thomas Jefferson keeps his. And he wrote the thing!

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Sharply.*] Sophia! [*To DOLLY.*] Now that your sister Lucy's married their nephew, Steptoe Washington, they make you one of the family.

DOLLY.

[*Shaking head “no.”*] That doesn't pay the landlord.

MRS. SPARKLE.

Move to smaller house!

DOLLY.

Laws! When one begins that, one keeps on moving—to houses smaller and smaller.

MRS. SPARKLE.

Then come live with us!

DOLLY.

As a poor relation? No, thank thee! 'Tis the first step to the Old Ladies' Home!

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Angrily.*] That is not the spirit of your Quaker father.

DOLLY.

[*With decided brogue.*] No, 'tis my Irish mother's. Mary Coles, from Enniscorthy, on the River Slaney, County Wexford. Heaven rest her soul! [*More excitedly.*] And look you—if I didn't take boarders, I should have to turn boarder myself—and the approval of the best society and the Continental Congress wouldn't pay me for that!

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Reprovingly.*] Your temper, ma'am!

DOLLY.

[*Walking about agitatedly.*] My mother's!

MRS. SPARKLE.

The brogue says that.

DOLLY.

Thy pardon. But 'tis hardly borne with patience. A woman left alone, in scarce a year of marriage, with just enough estate to pay the debts

—and then, rebuked—in kindest spirit, of course, for wanting to keep a decent roof over her head, a decent frock on her bones and a decent independence!

MRS. SPARKLE.

Then marry!

DOLLY.

Not one year a widow!

MRS. SPARKLE.

A widow isn't a cask of wine—to wait for age!

DOLLY.

But waits for love!

MRS. SPARKLE.

Most indelicate! A young girl marries 'cause she's in love; a widow should marry—to keep out of it!

CLOTILDE.

[*At door, to DOLLY.*] A page from the Congress. Monsieur Burr invites Madame Todd to the gallery.

DOLLY.

Mrs. Todd's compliments, but she's with company, say to Colonel Burr. [*Exit CLOTILDE.*]

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Gasping.*] If Martha Washington heard that! My snuff, Sophia! [*SOPHIA searches in hand-bag.* MRS. SPARKLE, *impatiently.*] Quick, girl.

SOPHIA.

[*Looking in hand-bag.*] Not here, ma'am.

MRS. SPARKLE.

Then leave the room !

SOPHIA.

[*Rising, poutingly.*] Because you're going to talk of that wicked Mr. Burr !

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Severely.*] What do you know of that man ?

SOPHIA.

Only what they say at school. He has the finest leg of any man in Congress !

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Angrily.*] Leave the room ! [SOPHIA *exits into hall, where she sits in bay window.* MRS. SPARKLE, *continuing to DOLLY.*] And that figure you harbor here ! No extremity can excuse it ; least of all, your widowhood !

DOLLY.

I'd never think to plead it, ma'am. In my mother's widowhood, he lodged here. He has always been most scrupulous of my awkward circumstances. Whatever his figure, Mr. Burr is a gentleman !

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Nose in air.*] Presbyterian !

DOLLY.

A man can be a Christian in any church !

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Dogmatically.*] Perhaps. But a gentleman only in the Episcopalian !

DOLLY.

If he were Turk, he's no less my friend !

MRS. SPARKLE.

'Tis notorious, he admires you !

DOLLY.

[*Hands on hips.*] I shouldn't be in woman's shape, if he didn't ! Colonel Burr admires the sex—pretty ones because they please him, and the ugly ones—because he's sorry for them. His admiration I rate lightly ; but not his friendship.

MRS. SPARKLE.

He'd prove it best by lodging elsewhere.

DOLLY.

Heaven forbid ! My most generous patron ; pays forty shillings the week for the second-floor-front, thirty-five more for his meals. Dines out half the time, and scarcely ever home for breakfast !

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*With significant toss of head.*] That I quite believe !

DOLLY.

Mr. Burr makes my house the fashion, gives it reputation.

MRS. SPARKLE.

Not his own, thank heaven ! He lost that years ago ! So Washington wouldn't receive him in his home.

DOLLY.

Oh, George himself was no Joseph !

MRS. SPARKLE.

But had the grace to hide it! This one parades his peccadilloes. Boasts his conquests!

DOLLY.

[*Protestingly.*] Oh, never! If Colonel Burr kisses, he doesn't tell. That I promise thee.

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Rising, angrily.*] Thank you, I'm in no danger!

DOLLY.

[*Conciliatingly.*] Nor I, good friend! As for these stories, laws, ma'am, gallantry's the fashion! The gentlemen all affect the air of having a little French milliner behind the bookcase, when there's really nothing there but cobwebs. And thee and I've lived long enough to know that no mere man could be so wicked as they credit Mr. Burr [MRS. SPARKLE *is startled*] and yet retain the esteem of his countrymen, as he has. Half the states voting stubbornly, for months, to make him President.

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Interrupting.*] Oh, there's plenty of his stripe!
[*From behind her hand.*] And 'tis notorious they stand by one another!

[*Enter MERRY.*

MERRY.

[*At door, as if to withdraw.*] Beg pardon——

DOLLY.

[*Quickly.*] Pray walk in—— [*Presenting him.*] Sir Anthony Merry.

MERRY.

[*Bowing.*] Your servant! The debate is over, Mr. Burr bade me say, and the gallery closed.

[MRS. SPARKLE *disconcerted.*

DOLLY.

Then they're near a vote?

MERRY:

They were near blows when I left.

MRS. SPARKLE.

The boobies—when they've only to re-choose John Adams!

DOLLY.

Impossible, ma'am! His wife's declared she'd not live at the new capital.

MRS. SPARKLE.

Quite right! All swamp and no society!

DOLLY.

[*With a sniff.*] Of course! A lady accustomed to the gayeties and dissipations of Quincy, Massachusetts!

MERRY.

There'll be no one elected, I take it, from the bitter talk just now in your Parliament.

MRS. SPARKLE.

Take no comfort from that, sir! Merely a family quarrel. You married, sir?

MERRY.

Unhappily, yes—— [*Correcting himself.*] I

mean, so much loveliness makes one rather regret ——

MRS. SPARKLE.

Then your lady isn't with you ?

MERRY.

[*Good-naturedly.*] Happily, no!—I had to make sure Lady Merry'd be content here. She's bringing a younger sister, and has had such alarming reports of the country and people.

DOLLY.

She'll find us as God made us !

MERRY.

[*Assenting.*] She anticipates the worst !

DOLLY.

Then we can't disappoint her !

MERRY.

Thanks ! Most amiable of women—when you understand her.

DOLLY.

We're sure to do that, if you're here long enough.
[*A church-bell rings ; then a second ; then several more, as if all the bells in town were ringing.*]

MRS. SPARKLE.

What does that mean—the bells ? [*A cannon-shot heard.*] Cannons, too !

[*Martial music in street.*]

SOPHIA.

[*Entering from bow window.*] They're crowds in the streets, cheering, and music!

DOLLY.

[*Animatedly.*] The election, of course! They've chosen a President!

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*With feeling.*] A gentleman, pray God!

DOLLY.

[*Ringing.*] I'll send to learn. [*Enter PINCKNEY from door left.*] Run to the tavern, next door, ask the news, who's elected? [*The door-knocker heard.*] There's the door. [*CLOTILDE, who has answered to the ring, goes into hall.*] They'll know. [*Door heard to open and close; voices in hall.*] It's Colonel Burr——

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Rising.*] That man!—Come, Sophia! We'll go!

BURR.

[*Entering in season to hear.*] Better wait, ma'am; crowds block the way.—I had to fight through.

MRS. SPARKLE.

What's happened? Anything wrong?

BURR.

Matter of taste, ma'am. Mr. Jefferson's chosen President.

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Horried.*] That atheist!—Beats the devil!

BURR.

[*With mock gravity.*] And by *only one* vote, ma'am. Eight states declared for Mr. Jefferson, seven for the *other*—[*bowing to indicate himself*] candidate.

DOLLY.

Then you, of course, are Vice-President?

BURR.

[*Ruefully.*] Alas! The law so orders!

MRS. SPARKLE.

You! Vice-President of the Unite—— Outrageous! [*Extends hand in gesture of anger.*]

BURR.

[*Kissing her hand.*] Thanks for your sympathy, ma'am! God knows I've done nothing to deserve that fate. [*In tone of hopelessness.*] Vice-President to Jefferson, with his health of a stalled-ox, and sure of a second term! Eight years of obscurity for A. Burr! [*Through ripple of laughter.*] My compliments to Mr. Hamilton's friends! They've done for me this time! [*Laughing heartily.*] Vice-President!

MERRY.

Mr. Jefferson's no friend of England! We hoped for his defeat.

BURR.

[*Quickly.*] You should have made that known, sir!

MERRY.

Would it have changed the result?

BURR.

[*Laughing.*] No! But hastened it! And spared the country months of wrangling, such as you witnessed to-day. You must have been hard put to keep your face straight!

MERRY.

[*Bewildered.*] But I took it serious. Why, one of 'em quoted Latin!

BURR.

[*Nodding assent.*] Randolph of Roanoke. But he'd been drinking. [*To DOLLY.*] You should have heard them abuse me—Hamilton's friends—just before the final vote! In their rage they didn't speak my name, they barked it! [*Imitating.*] Burr, burr, burr! I kept looking up at the gallery, hoping you'd be there; then hurried a page here to fetch you. Lord! How they did abuse me! You'd have been so amused!

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Stiffly.*] Mrs. Todd's mourning forbids amusements.

DOLLY.

But to hear an old friend blackguarded? The most censorious wouldn't deny one that pleasure!

MRS. SPARKLE.

There'll be other opportunities!

BURR.

But the rare occasion, ma'am, may never recur, even in your blooming lifetime! A tie in the vote for President!

MRS. SPARKLE.

You had hand in it!

BURR.

So they said to-day. As though I carried the high office in my vest pocket!

MRS. SPARKLE.

One word from you would have settled the matter long ago.

DOLLY.

[*Coming down ; with spirit.*] Yes! One word from Mr. Burr, a nod of the head, would have made him President. Every one knows that!

BURR.

Just as well you weren't in the gallery! You'd been blowing kisses to Madison. 'Twas *he* spoke in my defense!

DOLLY.

The great Madison?

BURR.

Declared the Congress would resent advice from either candidate how to cast their votes; I had no more right to urge my own defeat than my election.

DOLLY.

Splendid!

BURR.

And amazed me all the more in Madison, who's Jefferson's friend, and has never liked me. I vowed my eternal gratitude; told him, if need be, I'd go to—— [*The others startled.*] But he promptly assured me I need go no further than Fourth Street—and bring him with me— [*bowing to DOLLY*] to Mrs. Todd's!

DOLLY.

[*Startled.*] *Me?* Why, I doubt he's ever seen me.

BURR.

[*With a twinkle.*] He's caught a glimpse of you.

DOLLY.

[*Quickly, as if in a panic.*] When, sir? Where?
 [*Crosses to SALLY, as if for support.*]

BURR.

He didn't detail, but I surmised, from the zeal of his admiration, he'd seen considerable of you.

DOLLY.

[*In double-meaning.*] That must do him for the present.

BURR.

But I've promised ——

DOLLY.

[*Indifferently.*] Next week, then, or ——

BURR.

[*Insisting.*] The man's waiting, now.

DOLLY.

Waiting ?

BURR.

Presuming on your good nature, I said he might present himself at four o'clock, unless advised contrary. I'll send word. *[Starts to ring.*

SOPHIA.

[To DOLLY.] No, no, do have him in, just for a *look!* He's the one — *[To BURR.]* 'Tis James Madison ?

BURR.

Yes.

SOPHIA.

Constitution man ? *[BURR nods "yes."]* He's the one jilted Kitty Floyd, the Long Island beauty, for wearing rouge !

DOLLY.

[Touching cheek in alarm.] Laws !

MRS. SPARKLE.

[Sternly.] Sophia !

SOPHIA.

[Continuing.] Just out of braids ; and after the most fiery courtship !

BURR.

[Laughing.] Madison ! Never !

MRS. SPARKLE.

Where'd you learn that scandal ?

SOPHIA.

School! Some of the girls had seen correspondence—most passionate letters! Why, they even say ——

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Thunderingly.*] You needn't!

[SOPHIA continues the story, in pantomime and whispers, to DOLLY and SALLY, as they gradually move up stage.]

DOLLY.

[*Turning to BURR, indicating MRS. SPARKLE.*] Win her over; she doesn't like you.

MRS. SPARKLE.

Passionate letters! Absurd! [*Sits at table, L.*]

BURR.

Quite! Mr. Madison never wrote anything "passionate"—except the Constitution.

MRS. SPARKLE.

Hamilton wrote that, his friends say.

BURR.

To be sure, ma'am! And the Bill of Rights, and the Treaty with England he wrote. And, of course, Washington's Farewell Address! In short, to hear Hamilton's friends he wrote most everything important to modern society, except Ben Franklin's almanac and the Ten Commandments. And presently they'll have him revising those!

MRS. SPARKLE.

New quarrel?

[DOLLY crosses to back of armchair, L.]

BURR.

The same, always!

MRS. SPARKLE.

That French petticoat, Jumel?

BURR.

Nothing so worth-while, ma'am! Politics, mere politics! You see, Washington bequeathed Hamilton two of his most cherished possessions—an antique silver snuff-box, and his ancient grudge against me. As Hamilton no longer snuffs he displays the *other* bequest on every *public* occasion.

MRS. SPARKLE.

Yes. Privately, I hear, you're friends.

BURR.

[*Assenting.*] The same tastes, habits and associations.

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Meaningly.*] That's what I meant.

[*DOLLY comes down intent on BURR's procedure with MRS. SPARKLE.*]

BURR.

[*Offering snuff-box, at sign from DOLLY.*] Will you?

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Refusing.*] Abominable habit!

BURR.

[*With cajolery.*] But pretty custom, in some hands. I had the honor to know your first husband.

DOLLY.

[*Gesture of dismay, which only BURR sees.*]
There never was but one!

BURR.

[*Elaborate gallantry.*] Not the fault of my sex, I'm sure. [MRS. SPARKLE *takes pinch of snuff from his box.* BURR *nods toward SOPHIA.*] That pink of a girl, with the refreshing air of the schoolroom—sister?

MRS. SPARKLE.

Daughter!

DOLLY.

Youngest of six.

BURR.

Six? Thank you, ma'am.

MRS. SPARKLE.

For what?

BURR.

Sharing, so freely, your heritage of beauty. Blood will tell!

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Dryly.*] Wasn't your grandfather the famous divine, Jonathan Edwards?

BURR.

[*Bowing assent.*] Head of Princeton College.

MRS. SPARKLE.

A pious man and a great preacher!

DOLLY.

Under his guidance, Mr. Burr studied for the ministry. [*To BURR.*] And your father was clergyman?

BURR.

[*Taking the hint.*] And his father, too.—Like Mrs. Todd, I come from a line of preachers.

MRS. SPARKLE.

A great responsibility—such a heritage!

BURR.

Prodigious, ma'am! One has to do the sinning for three generations! [*A chime clock in the hall strikes four. On the last stroke the door-knocker is heard. The young women come hurriedly from the hall. BURR, looking at his watch.*] Madison—on the stroke! [*To DOLLY.*] With your permission, I'll—— [*Starts toward hall.*] For, I warn you, he's most timid with the ladies.

[*Exit.*]

DOLLY.

[*To MRS. SPARKLE.*] Pray receive him. [*To SALLY.*] Come with me. [*Starts to exit.*]

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Recalling her.*] My dear—very little rouge—if he's timid. And, if you don't fancy him, I'd like him for one of my girls.

[*DOLLY exits. Enter BURR and MADISON.*]

BURR.

[*Presenting him.*] Let me introduce Mr. Madison—[*general bowing*] former classmate at

Princeton College. [*Patronizingly.*] And next Secretary of State.

MADISON.

[*Protesting.*] But, sir —

BURR.

You've accepted ?

MADISON.

[*With characteristic doubt.*] Yes—and—no.

BURR.

[*Patting MADISON on the back.*] Good! The very man for the post!

MRS. SPARKLE.

Unmarried, I believe ?

MADISON.

No fault of my own!

MRS. SPARKLE.

Then easy corrected! The President being widower, and Vice-President no better, the State Department must provide "The First Lady of the Land."

MADISON.

So Mr. Jefferson says.

MRS. SPARKLE.

Most important that you take a wife!

MADISON.

Keeps me 'wake o' nights, ma'am —

MERRY.

[*Coming down.*] May the cares of your office prove merely domestic!

MADISON.

Mr. Jefferson's purpose.

MERRY.

A people so hostile 'mong themselves, as witness to-day, won't court peace abroad.

MADISON.

We don't anticipate trouble.

MERRY.

[*Pompously.*] Diplomacy always anticipates.

MADISON.

[*Surprised.*] Then, *you*, sir — ?

BURR.

[*Intervening quickly.*] Sir Anthony Merry's come to look us over, and if he likes the place, remains British Minister at Conococheague.

MERRY.

[*Bewildered.*] Why! I thought 'twas Washington.

BURR.

[*As if suddenly remembering.*] Yes, of course, they're going to call it Washington! I prefer the Indian name.

MERRY.

Why change it?

MRS. SPARKLE.

Or the place? Capital should remain *here*, Philadelphia.

MADISON.

Too fast and frivolous, Congress found.

MERRY.

But this other, our Legation reports, a wilderness !

BURR.

[*Deferentially.*] Mr. Madison chose it.

MADISON.

[*Correcting.*] Mr. Jefferson! I merely approved.

MERRY.

I hope Lady Merry does !

[*Engages in conversation with MRS. SPARKLE, as they turn up-stage.*]

MADISON.

[*Sotto-voce to BURR.*] Will they remain ?

BURR.

I'll see you're left alone. [*Slapping him on the back.*] Buck up !

MADISON.

[*Sotto-voce.*] Any chance ?

BURR

[*Encouragingly.*] She's interested !

MADISON.

Say so ?

BURR.

No—but decorating herself. Always good sign !

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Calling.*] Mr. Madison! [*He crosses to her.*]

MERRY.

[*Coming down to BURR.*] To-day's events, I anticipate, change your plans!

BURR.

On the contrary, confirm them.

MERRY.

But as Vice-President, you can't take Mexico for yourself!

BURR.

Great ventures can't stop for small morals! When it comes to that point, I'll resign the office. Only get me from London the loan I require.

MERRY.

[*Drawing, partly, letter from breast-pocket.*] I've written to-day—200,000 dollars.

BURR.

Pounds, sir, 200,000 pounds!

MERRY.

I thought dollars!

BURR.

[*Icily.*] 'Tis an expedition I plan, sir—not a picnic!

[*DOLLY and SALLY heard off.* MADISON hastens to BURR, obviously ill at ease. MERRY rejoins MRS. SPARKLE.

SOPHIA.

[To PINCKNEY, noting MADISON'S embarrassment.] Isn't he gay?

[Reënter SALLY followed by DOLLY. At sight of former MADISON turns inquiringly to BURR.]

DOLLY.

[Sotto-voce to SALLY.] "Ankle" man!

BURR.

Mr. Madison, ladies!

[An awkward pause in which MADISON plainly shows his embarrassment and timidity. During the following dialogue SOPHIA seated on the sofa between SALLY and PINCKNEY "guys" MADISON, partly in pantomime and partly with half-whispered interjections.]

DOLLY.

I've heard much of Mr. Madison. Strange we've never met before.

MADISON.

Yes, ma'am.

DOLLY.

From Virginia, I believe.

MADISON.

Mr. Jefferson's state—yes, ma'am.

DOLLY.

[At a loss what to say.] It—it—snows there?

MADISON.

Sometimes—in winter.

SOPHIA.

[*To her companions, sotto-voce.*] Repartee!

DOLLY.

You find our climate trying?

MADISON.

Yes—and—no.

SOPHIA.

[*Same business.*] Diplomat!

MADISON.

That is—has compensations.

DOLLY.

Dinners, cards, and dances?

MADISON.

I meant, rather, outdoor sports, like walking.

SOPHIA.

Isn't he wild!

DOLLY.

Does thee visit the theatre?

MADISON.

[*Nodding "yes."*] The Wax-works, ma'am.

DOLLY.

To encourage the drama! And fond of music?

MADISON.

Mr. Jefferson plays the fiddle —

DOLLY.

Yes—we hear him. [MERRY *sniffs*.

MADISON.

And sometimes I accompany him.

DOLLY.

Second fiddle? [BURR *coughs*.

MADISON.

[*Modestly.*] Banjo.

SOPHIA.

[*To companion.*] Talented!

DOLLY.

I dote on the banjo! [BURR *disconcerted.*] 'Tis the one instrument for a man! [SOPHIA *coughs*.

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Sharply; prodding her with walking-stick.*] Sophia!—We're leaving! [General movement.

DOLLY.

[*Crossing to* MRS. SPARKLE.] Now you've spoke with Mr. Burr, you see he doesn't deserve what people say.

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*Severely.*] Every bit! [*Beaming.*] He's charming!—If I'm ever driven to lodgers, he can have my second-floor-front.

BURR.

[*Observing* DOLLY'S approach, pats MADISON on back, saying *sotto-voce.*] Buck up, man! Now's

your chance! [*Aloud, as DOLLY reaches them.*]
 But I warn you; I've asked Mrs. Todd to marry
 me. [*All indicate interest.*]

MADISON.

[*Startled.*] Ah!

DOLLY.

[*To BURR, laughing.*] And so you have twenty
 other women, and just as seriously. With Colo-
 nel Burr a proposal of marriage is a polite cere-
 monial, a mere courtesy. He offers his heart to
 the ladies—[*taking BURR's snuff-box and handing
 it to MADISON*] with no more meaning than he
 offers his snuff-box to the gentlemen. He expects
 it returned—after a pinch or two!

[*Returns BURR his snuff-box, and crosses to
 MRS. SPARKLE.*]

FOOTMAN.

[*At door announcing.*] Mrs. Sparkle's car-
 riage!

BURR.

[*Offering arm.*] My attendance, ma'am?

MRS. SPARKLE.

[*About to take his arm, withdraws it.*] But I'll
 lose my reputation!

BURR.

[*Putting her hand on his arm.*] You shall have
 mine!

[*BURR and MRS. SPARKLE exit, the latter
 obviously pleased by his gallant atten-
 tions. The others follow. DOLLY sees*]

them into hall and turns to find MADISON prinking before the mirror.

MADISON.

[*Advancing eagerly, his bearing suddenly changed to one of bold admiration and attack.*] I didn't dare hope for so speedy renewal of our——

DOLLY.

[*Interrupting.*] Mr. Madison! *that* never happened!

[*Winces as she moves from him a few steps.*]

MADISON.

[*After slight pause of bewilderment, and observing the limp.*] No. Of course not!

DOLLY.

It couldn't have happened!

MADISON.

So I've said to myself—twenty times over. Nothing so delightful could happen. I dreamed it! [*Quizzingly.*] Ankle better?

DOLLY.

Thee gentlemen of Congress should vote the walks kept free of ice.

MADISON.

Never with my vote, ma'am!

DOLLY.

After last night's—accident?

MADISON.

Not "accident," act of Providence!

DOLLY.

[*Startled.*] What!

MADISON.

In that belief I stand here.

DOLLY.

[*Sitting on couch. Then inconsequently.*] Sit thee down.

MADISON.

[*Continuing, with growing excitement.*] To-day's attack on Mr. Burr. My impulse to protest, though I opposed his election. His extravagant thanks. The proffer of *any* service in my behalf, and this—this interview, all Providence!

DOLLY.

Thee helped a little! And thy name would have opened the door any time.

MADISON.

[*Resignedly.*] Timidity.

DOLLY.

Modesty, the world says.

MADISON.

No, I know my deserts; but one doesn't get from law books the graces of the ballroom; and for some 'tis easier to frame a statute than turn a compliment. And if I've feared to enter here, 'twas only that—well, I knew you were sought by one utterly beyond me in the ways that please women.

DOLLY.

That comes with practice.

MADISON.

[*With gesture "no."*] A gift of the gods—denied me!

DOLLY.

Surely thee wouldn't exchange?

MADISON.

Yes and no! There's been times when I thought I'd like to! When I've seen you of an afternoon, in the fashion-parade, surrounded by famous wits and beaux, and noted how completely their temper accorded with your own, I'd gladly changed place with the veriest macaroni of the lot!

DOLLY.

Don't tell it, sir! Thee's reputed a serious man.

MADISON.

To my sorrow, and most unjustly!

DOLLY.

'Tis no demerit!

MADISON.

I know no greater obstacle to the favor of a charming woman.

DOLLY.

[*As if in contradiction.*] I married a Quaker!

MADISON.

[*Sitting beside her, on couch.*] 'Tis that gives me courage! Else I'd never dare offer my hand

and heart, nor beg the chance to prove, by a life of affection and devotion, that I'm vastly more human than my friends report!

DOLLY.

[*Taken aback.*] Why, sir! You amaze me!

MADISON.

Myself no less, ma'am!

DOLLY.

A declaration?

MADISON.

[*Assenting.*] My meaning!

DOLLY.

Laws, sir! Ten minutes in the house—and a declaration! [*Rises.*] You've made a wager; a rakish wager! "Supper for the company—at the 'Italian Inn,' or Peg Mullen's. Oysters and champagne wine, that you propose to Widow Todd, 'fore candle-light." Come, sir, it is a wager?

MADISON.

[*With increasing fervor.*] More than wager—a vow, to myself, last night, when your door closed between us, that if ever again I had the chance, though it came in street, church or market-place; if the whole world looked on and listened; and though I know my suit is hopeless—yet I'd speak the words that quicken my heart and surge to my lips at every thought of you. Love me, and be my wife!

DOLLY.

[*After a pause.*] To answer thy bluntness in kind, I've resolved not to marry again.

MADISON.

You were unhappy?

DOLLY.

Most happy!

MADISON.

Then what better tribute to a sweet memory than to seek its renewal? Persistent widowhood is a poor elegy.

DOLLY.

You'll never swing for want of argument! That's one I never thought of!

MADISON.

I've thought of twenty—a *hundred*—to persuade you; pondered and phrased them 'gainst this very moment that I felt *must* come! Often 'mid the wrangles of Congress, a new one rushes in on me, and I'll grope in the debate. Why, even as I toiled and troubled over the Constitution —

DOLLY.

Never!

MADISON.

[*Excitedly.*] Yes, yes, I believe, I shame to say, I could point to this clause and that, left vague and uncertain, only because my wayward thoughts wandered off to you. [*Mildly.*] Ah, dear lady, I've courted you long and wildly!

DOLLY.

[*Rather chaffingly.*] I hadn't noticed it. Though, sometimes, as we passed in the street ——

MADISON.

[*Drawing closer.*] So seemed to me at times! But then came your marriage to Jack Todd—and the thought of returning here, each season of Congress, and renew—at every sight of you—or mere hearing of your name—the memory of what I'd missed—disturbed me so I would have quit public life—only for my good friend—Mr. Jefferson.

DOLLY.

Who doubtless suggested more effective consolations.

MADISON.

[*Assenting.*] He advised even larger activities in the public service, and that, meanwhile, I seek distraction by travel—in strange lands.

DOLLY.

And so thee traveled to Long Island! [MADISON *obviously startled.*] And the distraction in that strange land—pretty?

MADISON.

[*Protestingly.*] I beg of you ——

DOLLY.

[*Insisting.*] Miss Floyd. Was she pretty?

MADISON.

[*As if trying to recall.*] I—I don't recollect—[*looking at her meaningly*] now.

DOLLY.

Clever ?

MADISON.

[*Dubiously.*] She had some reputation for wit
—in Long Island.

DOLLY.

Blonde or dark ?

MADISON.

Yes—and—no.

DOLLY.

One or t'other, man !

MADISON.

[*Confidently.*] Right, ma'am ! But which—
I —

DOLLY.

Well, her eyes, brown, or black—or—like mine,
perhaps ? [Looks straight at him.]

MADISON.

[*Promptly gesturing "no."*] Or I shouldn't be
here !

DOLLY.

And for wearing rouge thee jilted her ?

MADISON.

[*In surprise.*] Jilt her—I ?

DOLLY.

[*Nodding "yes."*] Gossip says.

MADISON.

Shoe's on wrong foot.

DOLLY.

[*Indignant.*] What! Thee don't mean she——? And why, pray?

MADISON.

Met some one she preferred.

DOLLY.

Reason enough! But he must have been a—paragon!

MADISON.

A parson! And played the forte-pianer!

DOLLY.

Laws! What taste! [*Gesture of piano-playing.*] A man at the forte-pianer! When she might have had the banjo! The forte-pianer! 'Tis a kind of fancy-work. And you loved her?

MADISON.

Does one love twice?

DOLLY.

[*With mischief.*] “What better tribute to a sweet memory.”

MADISON.

[*Moving toward her eagerly.*] Then I may hope?

DOLLY.

[*Gesture of decisive “no.”*] I fear not!

MADISON.

[*Resignedly.*] I knew that.

DOLLY.

Knew ——?

MADISON.

That you'd refuse me.

DOLLY.

And yet asked me?

MADISON.

After my vow, last night, I was bound—to try!
Though I knew full well you're to marry Mr.
Burr.

DOLLY.

[*Startled.*] But, sir, I've no such intention!

MADISON.

Mr. Burr has!

DOLLY.

[*Bridling.*] 'Tis for me to say!

MADISON.

[*Assenting.*] Yes—and—no.

DOLLY.

[*With some temper.*] Yes—or—no!

MADISON.

[*Appeasingly.*] Whatever you *say* 'twill come
to the same. Mr. Burr wants you for his wife.

DOLLY.

But suppose I don't love him?

MADISON.

Nothing to do with it!

DOLLY.

[*Flaring up.*] Indeed !

MADISON.

[*Continuing.*] Enough for Mr. Burr that he loves you, and means to marry you.

DOLLY.

Whether I will or not ?

MADISON.

[*Laughing, but meaning to pique her.*] But you will, finally. His mind is bent on it ! And even you, rarest of women, will do as he wishes.

DOLLY.

You seem very sure !

MADISON.

If I weren't sure, perfectly sure, that Mr. Burr will have his way, would I offer myself ? After hearing his proposal, just now, could I be so disloyal, if I weren't sure my own suit is hopeless, against this man your sex has always found resistless ?

DOLLY.

[*With finality.*] I'd marry no man against my will !

MADISON.

He will convince you !

DOLLY.

How ?

MADISON.

If I knew how, dear lady, I'd do it myself.

DOLLY.

Of course, there are many ways to win a woman.

MADISON.

[*Ruefully.*] And Mr. Burr has 'em all, *by heart*. While I—know only two ways—and those by hearsay! One is to carry her off!

DOLLY.

By force?

MADISON.

[*Assenting.*] If need be—a knock on the head!

DOLLY.

[*Amazed.*] Wherever d'you learn such ungodly ——?

MADISON.

[*Quickly.*] From the Indians, 'mong whom I worked as missionary. And maids wooed in that fashion, they say, make the best squaws! The other way the woman knocks the man on the head and carries him off.

DOLLY.

As if any woman could do so ——!

MADISON.

Oh, bless you, she doesn't really do it! You only let her think she does it. [*Rises.*] And I may call again?

DOLLY.

When you've forgotten your *vow*!

MADISON.

Never, ma'am, while there's a chance—a fighting chance! [DOLLY *shakes her head* "no."] Oh, I shall lose, I know, but until you've given your word to Mr. Burr; 'til he lands you at the altar-step—I shall try, and never cease to try—though I wait to the crack of doom!

DOLLY.

Mr. Madison, is there Indian blood in your family?

MADISON.

[*Startled.*] Why —?

DOLLY.

Thy persistence!

MADISON.

It annoys you?

DOLLY.

[*Seriously.*] 'Tis an honor, sir, a great honor, that no woman should take lightly. But since you know 'tis hopeless —

MADISON.

I ask only to see you again.

DOLLY.

[*Assenting.*] Well, when you return here—for the next Congress.

MADISON.

'Twill not meet here, but in the new capital, Washington.

DOLLY.

Yes. I'd forgot. Well, then, when this Congress adjourns.

MADISON.

[*Leading her on.*] The very end?

DOLLY.

[*Decisively.*] Not an hour before! There, I'm resolved!

MADISON.

And I resigned—'til Congress rises only, I vow it.

DOLLY.

[*With warning gesture.*] No more vows!

MADISON.

And if you decide to receive me before ——

DOLLY.

Not likely!

MADISON.

Ladies do change their minds.

DOLLY.

Then I will write thee.

MADISON.

[*Ruefully.*] "Write," dear lady? Alas, that means ——

DOLLY.

[*Impulsively.*] No, no, it doesn't, I assure thee. I've no such thought, this moment.

MADISON.

[*Fervidly.*] Lord! If Congress would only adjourn this moment!

DOLLY.

Thy presence might hasten matters.

MADISON.

Thank you, ma'am—recalling my duties.

DOLLY.

The Nation's interest only, sir.

MADISON.

Quite so! And you'll send me word?

DOLLY.

Yes.

[*Gives him his hat, which she gets from table L.*]

MADISON.

[*Loth to go.*] The very moment ——?

DOLLY.

As agreed. [*Gets his gloves from table.*]

MADISON.

Hall of Congress?

DOLLY.

[*Nodding "yes."*] Fifth and Chestnut.
[*Gives him his walking-stick.*]

MADISON.

No, my lodgings. "The Indian Queen." 'Tis nearer.

DOLLY.

As you choose.

MADISON.

No—to both! Better to both! So one's sure to find me. Else I'd be flying between them, like boys at tag. You *will* send to both?

DOLLY.

[*Moving toward door.*] Yes, yes.

MADISON.

[*Still lingering.*] And now, if you'd only ——

DOLLY.

Not a third message?

MADISON.

[*Seizing her hand.*] No—but give me assurance ——

DOLLY.

[*Drawing away.*] You've that—and to spare!

MADISON.

If you'll only promise ——

DOLLY.

Nothing more!

MADISON.

'Tis only 'til I call again—you'll take no more

risks on slippery pavements ! And God bless you, lady !

[Kisses both her hands fervidly and exits quickly. DOLLY stands at door looking after him, then turns front.]

DOLLY.

[Alone.] He—timid ?—My eye and Betty Martin !

CURTAIN

THE SECOND ACT

SCENE.—DOLLY TODD'S *parlor, three days later.*

It is evening and the room is lighted by many candles, some in sconces, others in candelabra. On the spinet, or elsewhere in conspicuous view, a banjo.

During the progress of the act, a dance is proceeding at the tavern next door. The music is heard faintly, the cello tones dominating.

As curtain rises, JENNINGS enters from hall.

PINCKNEY, *at table L., is unwrapping wax-paper from a bouquet.*

PINCKNEY.

Announce me to Colonel Burr.

JENNINGS.

Yes, sir. But he's awaiting Mr. Madison.

PINCKNEY.

Say to Colonel Burr I have word for him from the President. [JENNINGS starts to exit. Enter ENA FERRAR; young, gracious, in marked contrast to her sister, LADY MERRY. She is pretty, of the English type, and her clothes of a different style from that of the American women in the play.] Miss Ferrar! [Recalling JENNINGS to whom he hands the bouquet.] Care for these till Miss Ferrar leaves for the ball next door. One moment — [Detaches the dance-card. JEN-

NINGS *exits*. PINCKNEY gives ENA the dance-card.] The dance-card.

ENA.

[*Looking at card.*] 'Tis already written on!

PINCKNEY.

A suggestion, merely, of what I'd like.

ENA.

[*Reading from card.*] Quadrille, cotillion, reel, and two waltzes!

PINCKNEY.

'Tis only *half* the dances.

ENA.

But my sister, Lady Merry, might object.

PINCKNEY.

[*Overlooking card, dubiously.*] Then we'll omit the —

ENA.

[*Quickly.*] Waltzes!

PINCKNEY.

The quadrille! And that we'll sit out. So you may see what a modish assembly looks like among us savages.

ENA.

"Savages," indeed!

PINCKNEY.

Then we're not so red as we're painted?

ENA.

Fallal, no! I'm hoping we stay on a long time.

PINCKNEY.

[*In tone of proposal.*] If I have my way, you shall!

[LADY MERRY'S voice, in angry tones, heard off.]

MERRY.

[*At door, R.*] Ena, I think Angie's wanting you.

[ENA crosses to exit. Pauses at nod from PINCKNEY.]

PINCKNEY.

[*To MERRY, showing dance-card.*] May I have Miss Ferrar for these dances?

MERRY.

Ask Lady Merry!

PINCKNEY.

[*Starting to exit.*] I'll go at once.

[LADY MERRY'S voice still heard off; stamping foot, etc.]

ENA.

[*In alarm; taking dance-card.*] No, no—I'll tell her—later.

[*Exit ENA. BURR enters from hall.*]

BURR.

[*To PINCKNEY.*] What word from next door?

PINCKNEY.

[*To BURR.*] Mr. Jefferson begs you'll join him at supper—after the dance.

Burr.

[*Uncertain.*] I may be leaving before.

Pinckney.

[*Confidentially.*] He's rather anxious over this issue of the *Evening Post*. [*Shows paper.*]

Burr.

[*Taking the paper.*] What is it?

Pinckney.

[*Pointing to the article.*] An account of a dinner-party at Mr. Hamilton's.

Burr.

[*Lightly.*] Oh, yes. I've seen this. And I've asked Mr. Hamilton to explain.[*Continues reading.*]

Jennings.

[*At door.*] Mr. Madison. [MADISON enters.]

Burr.

[*To Pinckney.*] Tell the President—no need of concern. Hamilton and I will reach an understanding—[*as Madison comes down*] thanks to this gentleman.

Madison.

[*To Pinckney.*] I'm just from Mr. Hamilton. [MERRY and PINCKNEY move up stage, into the hall, where they are seen at intervals passing to and fro in animated conversation.]

BURR.

[*Pointing to newspaper.*] Did Hamilton say this?

MADISON.

[*Evasively.*] He'll be here presently.

BURR.

Does he deny he said it?

MADISON.

[*Appeasingly.*] Yes—and no!

BURR.

[*Impatiently.*] Madison, life's done much for you! Your ancestors gave you a fine head. Princeton gave you learning. The Nation gives you honor. Jefferson offers this place of power. But this you must do for yourself. Buck up and learn to say yes or no! Now does Hamilton own or deny this? [Taps the newspaper.]

MADISON.

Well—he does and he doesn't! That is, he neither denies nor affirms. He can't recall every word he may have used in all your hot rivalry of fifteen years.

BURR.

This isn't a matter of fifteen years, but of three days! And no great strain on memory to recall such words. [*Pointing to paper.*] "I look upon Mr. Burr to be a dangerous man." Did he say it, or didn't he?

MADISON.

Well, he might have said it——

Burr.

[Turning sharply.] Ah!

Madison.

[Correcting himself quickly.] It might be said—in jest—or banter.

Burr.

[Amiably.] Y-e-s.

Madison.

[Laughing.] It's become a custom, Hamilton says.

Burr.

[Assenting.] A superstition, if he likes. But did he use that phrase—of me?

Madison.

[As if to make light of it.] The phrase by itself, as it stands there, may mean anything.

Burr.

[Gesture of "no."] Only one thing—if he said it!

Madison.

But all depends—he argues—on the tone and spirit of the speech—on what preceded and followed—the context of the words.

Burr.

[With uplifted eyebrows.] Oh, he makes it a point of grammar, a matter of syntax, elocution, the dictionary! I make it a point of honor, for him to deny or acknowledge!

MADISON.

[*Quickly.*] He will, when you specify the instance, the particular occasion of the word.

BURR.

[*Indicating newspaper.*] But here it is! Printed!

MADISON.

The bare phrase you object to, yes, but nothing of what went before—or after.

BURR.

[*Slowly; after a pause.*] I see—I see. He has that in mind!

MADISON.

[*Nodding assent.*] I so took him.

BURR.

You didn't discuss it?

MADISON.

Oh, no!—I held to the printed word, as you directed.

BURR.

Good!

MADISON.

The rest may be table gossip, a mere invention of mischief, or malice.

BURR.

Perhaps. [*Calling.*] Sir Anthony! [MERRY comes down: PINCKNEY follows. BURR speaks to MERRY, glancing from time to time at newspaper.] You were at this dinner at Mr. Hamilton's?

MERRY.

Yes, three days ago.

BURR.

Large party ?

MERRY.

Twenty gentlemen or more.

BURR.

Ladies present ?

MERRY.

None.

BURR.

[*After a slight pause.*] Mrs. Todd was the toast of the evening ?

MERRY.

[*Uneasily.*] In—a—way,—yes—but ——

BURR.

[*Ironically.*] Of course, if 'twas in confidence to the twenty gentlemen ——

MERRY.

[*Breaking in.*] No, no; 'twas quite open! After a health to the new President, Mr. Hamilton proposed "The First Lady of the Land"; as we stood with glasses raised, some asked: "Mrs. *Madison* or Mrs. *Burr*?" [*Hesitates.*]

BURR.

[*Urging him.*] Yes —— ?

MERRY.

[*Continuing.*] “It comes to the same!” he replied. “And so one glass may serve for both, we’ll drink—Dolly Todd.”

BURR.

[*After a slight pause, with repressed temper.*] Was he drunk?—Hamilton?

MERRY.

[*With gesture of doubtful “no.”*] U’m—cheerful—like the rest of us. But, good gad, that isn’t printed?

BURR.

[*Lightly.*] Oh, no. Merely talked of, by most of the twenty gentlemen, and the lackeys who served them. When it comes to print, Mr. Hamilton sticks to politics. There he’s always been safe with me. If you will, Mr. Pinckney?

[*Hands newspaper to* PINCKNEY.

PINCKNEY.

[*Unfolding paper and reading.*] “The report that Mr. Hamilton will oppose James Madison for Secretary of State grows out of the gossip of a recent dinner-party at Mr. Hamilton’s. Some kill-joy questioned the host as to Madison’s fitness for the office ——”

MERRY.

[*Promptly.*] Yes, *I* did.

BURR.

[*Surprised.*] *You?*

MERRY.

[*Ingenuously.*] As British Minister, my chief concern is the State Department, and I asked, quite naturally—after the toast to Mrs. Todd—what Mr. Hamilton thought of this gentleman [*nodding to MADISON*] as Secretary of State.

BURR.

And he answered as they have it there?

[*PINCKNEY gives paper to MERRY. MERRY crosses to fireplace; reads in silence. BURR picks up banjo from spinet. Looks at MADISON smilingly; plunks a chord or two.*]

MERRY.

[*After a pause.*] Precisely what Mr. Hamilton said—that he looked upon Mr. Burr to be a dangerous man.

BURR.

The others heard, of course?

MERRY.

[*Assenting.*] Good God, yes! And were all attention! Fearing he had misunderstood, I said “but ’tis *Madison* who’s to be Secretary of State”; whereupon Mr. Hamilton repeated, quite measuredly: “Yes, and I look upon *Mr. Burr* to be a dangerous man.” [*Gives paper to BURR.*]

BURR.

[*To MADISON, and tapping paper, laughingly.*] Word for word, as they have it here.

MERRY.

But how'd they come by the story ?

BURR.

[*Indicating the newspaper.*] The *Post* has always been Hamilton's mouthpiece against [*indicating himself*] this "dangerous man." [*To PINCKNEY.*] Tell the President you left us laughing over the matter.

PINCKNEY.

And you will join him at supper ?

BURR.

[*Deep bow.*] Honored—if not detained.

[*MADISON accompanies PINCKNEY up stage at door. There they pause for a moment ; then disappear into hall.*

MERRY.

I must send that, at once, to London ! It will assure the loan you seek. When my people read between the lines ——

BURR.

[*With spirit.*] Read what ?

MERRY.

Why, your admitted influence with Madison.

BURR.

[*Laughing.*] No more influence than you have !

MERRY.

Directly, no ! But here, as in the Courts of Europe, there's always a Power behind the throne.

And, if our clever landlady becomes Mrs. Madison —

BURR.

[*Interrupting.*] If you please! No lady's name in this affair!

MERRY.

No name, of course! With diplomats a mere *hint* —

BURR.

[*Decisively.*] No, sir! Not by hint, intimation, nor innuendo! Not for a world of Mexicos!

MERRY.

[*Insistent.*] "Great ventures can't stop for small morals."

BURR.

[*Interrupting.*] No point here of small morals, sir, but—abuse of privilege, hospitality, with a charming woman [*as MADISON comes down*] whom I hope to make Mrs. Burr.

JENNINGS.

[*At door announcing.*] Mr. Alexander Hamilton.

MERRY.

[*Quickly, to BURR.*] Before you receive the gentleman, may I have word with him?

[BURR bows assent. MERRY exits.]

BURR.

[*To MADISON.*] I'll not see him!

[*Makes to exit.*]

MADISON.

[*Stopping him.*] I beg of you —

BURR.

[*With anger.*] After what Merry just told us!
No!

MADISON.

[*Persisting.*] Do me this favor; and come what may, I'm your friend!

BURR.

But what use?

MADISON.

[*Persuadingly.*] If you two men will come together—if only for a moment—I am sure you can compose this quarrel. And you must!

BURR.

You fear for him?

MADISON.

No!

BURR.

Then for me?

MADISON.

Even less! It's for Mrs. Todd I fear.

BURR.

Her name won't figure in —

MADISON.

[*Ironically.*] Won't it, indeed?

BURR.

No, not while we keep to the printed word.

[Indicates paragraph in newspaper.]

MADISON.

But the spoken word? That you heard just now from Merry. The talk of the twenty guests and the lackeys who served them? The words that went before, and followed the phrase you'd keep to—the "instance" they'd have you specify—the "particular occasion" of the words. Will her name figure there? Or won't it?

BURR.

[After a troubled pause.] I'll see him!

MADISON.

Thanks! *[Makes to exit.]* I'll fetch him and then leave you.

[A turmoil is heard from room, R. ENA enters hurriedly from R. As the door opens LADY MERRY'S voice heard off in angry colloquy. MERRY enters from hall.]

BURR.

[Stopping MADISON.] No,—the reception room—show him. *[MADISON exits C. BURR turns to MERRY, quizzically, indicating noise off.]* We might disturb Lady Merry.

[Exit, L. LADY MERRY'S voice heard in angry tones. Stamping foot, etc.]

MERRY.

What's the trouble with Angie?

ENA.

[*Tone of resignation.*] Angie!

MERRY.

Who now? Mrs. Todd?

ENA.

For the moment, no! It's the coiffeur. He forgot hair-powder, and Angie's telling him what she thinks of the American Republic.

[LADY MERRY *heard nearer in quarrel with the hair-dresser, who flees through the room protesting: "Oui, Madame. I fetch, Madame, etc."*

LADY MERRY.

[*Pursuing him to door, c.*] You'd better! And be quick about it!

HAIR-DRESSER.

Oui, I get ze powder!

LADY MERRY.

You a hair-dresser—indeed!

HAIR-DRESSER.

Oui, Madame!—I dress ze hair for General Washington! [*Exit.*

LADY MERRY.

[*Continuing toward door c., looking after him.*] Hell's bales! Don't you throw that man in my face! He's dressed General Washington's hair! For any and every complaint that one answer: "General Washington!" I tell Mrs. Todd's cook the roast is overdone and their excuse is: "Gen-

eral Washington has dined here." I say the Madeira's muddy, but—[*nose in air*] "General Washington didn't find it so!" They bring a pint of water for a bath and when I ask for more, "'Twas always plenty for the General!" The beds are hard beyond endurance, but, "General Washington has slept in 'em." I'll have them know I'm not dining with General Washington, nor drinking with him, nor sl— [MERRY and ENA shocked.] Well, in short, General Washington isn't paying my score! Pretty place to bring us!

MERRY.

Best the town affords, and pray be your usual, tactful self with our hostess.

LADY MERRY.

[*Spitefully.*] This—landlady?

ENA.

"First-lady-in-the-land" she'll likely be, Mr. Pinckney says.

MERRY.

So they said t'other night at Mr. Hamilton's dinner-table.

LADY MERRY.

Well, if you ask *my* opinion —

MERRY.

[*Interrupting in alarm.*] I don't!

LADY MERRY.

Well, I told her plump what was hinted there.

MERRY.

That she'd be Mrs. Madison or Mrs. Burr!

LADY MERRY.

Pounds to pickles she takes the rake!

ENA.

[*Despairingly.*] The Vice-President! [*Rises.*]
Hadn't we better make ready?

MERRY.

'Tis only next door.

LADY MERRY.

What time's this war-dance begin?

ENA.

It's a ball, Angie, to honor the new President.
Nine o'clock's the quadrille.

LADY MERRY.

That's all you'll dance with the yokels!

ENA.

I've engaged to waltz with Mr. Pinckney.

LADY MERRY.

Mr. Pinck——! Very social on short acquaintance—with that popinjay!

ENA.

Why do you speak so of these people?

LADY MERRY.

I'll say what I like!

ENA.

In Madrid or Petersburg they'd sent us packing!

LADY MERRY.

I never said such things in Spain or Russia.

ENA.

[*Cuttingly.*] You didn't speak the language well enough!

LADY MERRY.

[*Turning on her.*] I'll speak "language" you never heard before if that Yankee hangs about.

JENNINGS.

[*Announcing.*] The Marquis D'Yrujo and Miss McKean.

MERRY.

[*Sotto-voce.*] Careful! His fiancée.

LADY MERRY.

Oh! [*Enter D'YRUJO and SALLY. Bows.*]

SALLY.

[*To JENNINGS.*] Apprise Mrs. Todd.

LADY MERRY.

[*Introducing ENA.*] My sister, Miss Ferrar.
[*To D'YRUJO. Lorgnettes SALLY.*] So this is the future Marquise? How'd that happen?

D'YRUJO.

[*Bowing to SALLY.*] My answer, ma'am.

LADY MERRY.

[*To ENA.*] I must write Peggy this very day.
[*To SALLY.*] My cousin, Lady Peggy Hastings. D'Yrujo was head over heels to marry her.

SALLY.

[*Sweetly.*] My compliments to the lady !

LADY MERRY.

But he wanted too much !

SALLY.

Then my condolence !

LADY MERRY.

Thanks, though she'd have died in this awful country !

D'YRUJO.

[*To switch the conversation.*] Lately arrived, I believe.

LADY MERRY.

Last ship.

D'YRUJO.

Good crossing ?

LADY MERRY.

Only seven weeks from London—worse luck ! Now I see what we've come to, I wish it had been seven years ! What on earth keeps you here ?

D'YRUJO.

My king's interests.

LADY MERRY.

Have the Yankees left him any ?

D'YRUJO.

Mexico !

LADY MERRY.

They must have overlooked it!

[D'YRUJO *crosses to MERRY.* *They move up stage.*

JENNINGS.

[*At door, to SALLY.*] Directly, Mrs. Todd says.

LADY MERRY.

The house is full, if you're looking for lodgings.

SALLY.

We're calling on Mrs. Todd.

LADY MERRY.

[*Affecting surprise.*] You know her?

SALLY.

My dearest friend.

LADY MERRY.

[*Disdainfully.*] Oh! But I suppose no social lines are drawn here since the Declaration of Impudence. [*Enter DOLLY.* *She wears a gown of black lace, and Quaker cap and kerchief.* D'YRUJO *salutes DOLLY elaborately.* LADY MERRY *to DOLLY with insolence.*] Has that coiffeur returned?

DOLLY.

The servant will bring thee word.

LADY MERRY.

[*To the others.*] Fancy! After being jabbed and pulled for hours by a yokel hair-dresser [*to DOLLY*] recommended by you, ma'am, though I swear he learned his trade in a stable, to find he's brought no powder!

DOLLY.

'Tis little used here, ma'am.

LADY MERRY.

Since when ?

DOLLY.

It went out with the English ! Except for the middle-aged. The gentlemen complained it soiled their coats.

LADY MERRY.

[*Lorgnetting* DOLLY.] I notice they don't object to rouge !

DOLLY.

[*With glance at SALLY.*] Yes—and—no. [*To D'YRUJO.*] Thee'll be leaving soon for Washington ?

D'YRUJO.

[*With meaning.*] And you, too, we hope.

LADY MERRY.

Too bad there's no lady for the President's house ! Of course, I only mean ——

DOLLY.

[*Finishing for her.*] President's widower.

LADY MERRY.

And the Vice-President ?

DOLLY.

Mr. Burr has no wife—of his own.

LADY MERRY.

So many here—widowers ! How'd's happen—

not taking second wife? Though with Mr. Burr, easy understood. You made him so comfortable here! [*The others disconcerted.*] And my husband, too!

DOLLY.

Yes, Sir Anthony said he hadn't been so contented in years!

LADY MERRY.

[*Looking about.*] He warned me such accommodations were scarce, and dreaded my coming.

DOLLY.

So he kept saying, Lady Merry.

LADY MERRY.

Oh! Don't bother with my *title!* Since they're "taboo" here, I'll forget I'm Lady.

DOLLY.

Just be your own natural self, ma'am, if it makes you more comfortable.

CLOTILDE.

[*At door to* LADY MERRY.] The coiffeur, Madame, with powder.

[LADY MERRY and ENA rise.

DOLLY.

[*Mock regret.*] Oh, and we're just getting cozy!

ENA.

[*Sotto-voce to* DOLLY.] Please forgive Angie!

DOLLY.

[*Same business.*] And you forgive me.

[*They clasp hands.*

LADY MERRY.

[*At door.*] Ena! [*Exit* ENA.]

SALLY.

[*Laughing.*] A handful, isn't she?

DOLLY.

[*Angrily.*] She can't find things pleasant enough to say to me.

SALLY.

I notice she didn't say them. Though she didn't put you out any.

DOLLY.

Before that, I'd put her out! I would now, only I owe for this new frock.

SALLY.

[*Admiringly.*] Smartish!

DOLLY.

Mr. Madison may be calling—on his way to the dance.

SALLY.

His old flame, Miss Floyd, will be there.

DOLLY.

[*As if enlightened.*] O-o-h!—With the parson?
[*Gesture of piano playing.*]

SALLY.

She's jilted him!

DOLLY.

Laws! 'Tis a habit with her! If she keeps on

no man will go to Long Island. D'ye suppose she's come for another look at Mr. Madison?

SALLY.

As a Cabinet officer, he'll look better.

DOLLY.

[*Dubiously.*] Yes. And while she's at hand to console him, he'll think to hurry my answer.

SALLY.

[*Confidentially.*] Will you?

DOLLY.

I've half a mind.

SALLY.

Only half?

DOLLY.

[*Troubled.*] H'm, h'm.

SALLY.

Where's the other half?

DOLLY.

Second floor front!

SALLY.

You wouldn't think of marrying Burr!

DOLLY.

[*Rather pensively.*] One thinks a lot of things when the day's long!

SALLY.

[*Warningly.*] Dolly! That rake! Why, they say half the women he meets——

DOLLY.

[*Interrupting.*] Now don't tell a woman she mustn't love a man because other women love him! Competition is the life of trade! Whatever I think of Mr. Burr—[*seriously*] I'll take care he doesn't know it!

SALLY.

[*Warningly.*] Ah, but you're wavering!

DOLLY.

What woman wouldn't—between two such men? A woman half Quaker—half Irish!

[*Enter MERRY and D'YRUJO from hall.*

D'YRUJO.

[*To SALLY.*] At your service!

[*SALLY and DOLLY move up stage. Enter LADY MERRY, followed by ENA, from door R. They are in full attire for the ball.*

DOLLY.

[*Admiringly.*] Lady Merry, if you'll allow me, your cloak is gorgeous!

LADY MERRY.

You hear, Ena? I said 'twas good enough! Haven't had it on since my thirtieth birthday.

DOLLY.

How well it's worn!

[*All exeunt into hall, laughing, chatting, leave-taking. BURR enters from door L., crosses to spinet, takes up banjo, plays a few chords.*

Burr.

[*Turning to DOLLY at door.*] Well?

DOLLY.

[*Same tone.*] Well?

Burr.

Tell me.

DOLLY.

Tell thee what?

Burr.

Jim Madison's asked you!

DOLLY.

[*In tone of contradiction.*] What makes thee think so?

Burr.

[*Holding up banjo.*] I dote on the banjo.
[*Plays a few chords.*]

DOLLY.

Nonsense! Left here by a former lodger. I fetched it from the attic, to help make conversation. But I never knew you could ——

Burr.

Heaven forbid I couldn't do anything that Jim Madison does. [*Putting down banjo.*] Own up, he did make love!

DOLLY.

[*Pretending doubt.*] Um—yes and no!

BURR.

[*Rather slightly.*] That's like him! You haven't answered?

DOLLY.

Yes.

BURR.

[*Unhappy.*] Ah!

DOLLY.

[*Quickly.*] And no!

BURR.

That's like you—born diplomat!

DOLLY.

Laws! Should I jump down the man's throat the moment he opens his mouth to speak of marriage?

BURR.

[*Encouragingly.*] No, of course not!

DOLLY.

I must have time——

BURR.

[*Approvingly.*] Right!

DOLLY.

[*Continuing.*] —— to think it over.

BURR.

By all means! He must be reasonable!

DOLLY.

So he was! Most reasonable! Said he'd wait 'til the crack of doom!

BURR.

[*With mock surprise.*] I never knew him to be so—impulsive!

DOLLY.

I said he might call again—when Congress adjourns.

BURR.

I've never known you so deliberate.

DOLLY.

[*In alarm.*] Why? Does it threaten a long session?

BURR.

Until to-morrow.

DOLLY.

[*Dumbfounded.*] To-morrow!

BURR.

They adjourn then: to reassemble in Washington. Didn't he tell you that?

DOLLY.

[*Nodding "yes."*] He—he—mentioned Washington, but——

BURR.

Omitted the—— Deceived you, eh? What's happened the man? He's become human! And on first meeting with you! Shocking!

[*Takes snuff.*]

DOLLY.

We'd met before.

BURR.

Then he deceived me, as well as you.

DOLLY.

'Twas only by chance and quite informal. My heel slipped on the icy pavement, and Mr. Madison set me on my feet.

BURR.

And so you promptly took him off his! Woman!

DOLLY.

He can take care of himself!

BURR.

He'll have to! If he doesn't make you marry him, I'll make you marry me.

DOLLY.

O-o-h—you threaten me?

BURR.

Only to know my fate! I've paid my debt of gratitude to Madison, brought him here, sung his praises. Now you must choose between us!

DOLLY.

[*As if skeptical.*] You ask me to marry you?

BURR.

'Tisn't the first time!

DOLLY.

[*Looking in mirror.*] No, but I've never taken it serious.

BURR.

You do *now*. You looked in the mirror. First thing a woman does after a proposal!

DOLLY.

[*Shaking her head "no."*] A proposal from you — [*With pretended seriousness.*] Ah, I'm disappointed in thee: *so* disappointed!

BURR.

Disapp —?

DOLLY.

[*Interrupting.*] I've always counted thee a friend, a good friend. [*Laughing and lapsing into the brogue.*] And now you ask me to marry you! [*Starts to exit.*] Go 'long with you!

[*Extends her hand dismissingly; BURR takes and holds it.*]

BURR.

Not 'til your answer! Madison or me!

[*A pause.*]

DOLLY.

[*Drawing away, BURR still holding her hand.*] To-morrow.

BURR.

To-morrow may be Jemmy's. Now is mine!

DOLLY.

[*Turning suddenly and facing BURR.*] Well, then, advise me!

BURR.

Advise?

DOLLY.

As a friend. How would thee advise? As my best friend.

BURR.

Oh, hang it, that isn't fair! You put me on my honor.

DOLLY.

It has never failed me. Between Mr. Burr and Mr. Madison, whom had I better take?

BURR.

[*As if in doubt.*] Both have their points!

DOLLY.

[*Same business.*] 'Tis *that* troubles me.

BURR.

You've known Burr longer.

DOLLY.

But I know Madison better! Burr's a man of mystery. No one really knows him, and no one ever will—least of all, his wife!

BURR.

[*Persuadingly.*] "Vice-President and Mrs. Burr!"

DOLLY.

[*Same tone.*] "Secretary of State and Mrs. Madison!"

BURR.

'Twon't be said that fashion.

DOLLY.

No ?

BURR.

T'other way about. "Mrs. Madison and the Secretary of ——"

DOLLY.

[*Catching his meaning.*] That you call "singing his praises" ?

BURR.

[*Nodding.*] Yes.

DOLLY.

[*Continuing.*] Same tune as "Buck up, Jemmy!"

BURR.

Yes, to *you*, clever, ambitious [*DOLLY makes gesture of protest*], I know you best of all! Most ambitious woman in the sixteen states!

DOLLY.

Then of the honors you name ——

BURR.

There's a better, "Empress of Mexico!"

DOLLY.

[*Laughing.*] Laws! Still buzzing—that bee? Ever since I've known you, your head's run on Mexico!

BURR.

More than ever!

DOLLY.

Now you're Vice-President?

BURR.

Because of it! The thought of four years, possibly eight, of conspicuous insignificance appals me! And against that desert of ennui—an empire—to be had for the taking! An “*empire*”? We’d make it paradise!

DOLLY.

Go on so and I’ll be marrying you—to keep you out of mischief, and Mexico! Patience, man, and the prize you’ve just let go is yours, in eight years at most.

BURR.

[*Ruefully.*] Eight years! I shall be fifty. For a man at that age, no prizes—only consolations!

DOLLY.

Mr. Madison may feel the same, though, I believe, he’s a bit younger?

BURR.

Yes. And *I* brought him here! What a joke!

DOLLY.

Joke?

BURR.

[*Pointing to her heel.*] If the tilt of your French heel should change my destiny!

DOLLY.

[*Tilting her nose.*] The tilt of Cleopatra’s nose changed Cæsar’s.

BURR.

[*In tone of absurdity.*] But you marry Madison—with his “yes, and no”!

DOLLY.

He'll say yes *or* no, if I marry him. And, Ronnie, he's worth twenty of you!

BURR.

[*Nodding assent.*] Yes'—but not for you! I'm your man! And you know it.

[*Approaches her.*]

DOLLY.

[*Rising, draws away.*] I want none of thee—I've always told thee so.

BURR.

I never took you serious.

DOLLY.

[*Crossing to L.*] The conceit of the man!—"my man"!]

BURR.

[*With feeling.*] Who knows you best of all, understands you to the full! Who sees beneath that prim, Quaker kerchief a heart in rhythm with his own, a spirit gay and daring: that would droop like a caged bird, with prosy, timid Jemmy!

DOLLY.

[*Off her guard.*] "Timid"? [BURR *shows surprise.*] I'd question that of any man that plays the banjo! [*Soberly, and betraying her inmost thought.*] With him I should have peace, calm, the assurance of a love constant and absolute;—with you, unceasing doubt—the shame of rivalry, the torture of jealousy——

BURR.

[*Quickly, interrupting.*] Never—I can swear it!

DOLLY.

[*With brogue.*] Sure you can—with all the practice you've had! And the others you swore to; they believed you?

BURR.

I hope so!

DOLLY.

And you expect me to be equally foolish?

BURR.

No! That's the irony! The one woman with whom I really mean it doesn't believe me.

DOLLY.

Faith—you're always so honest with me,—I marvel I never do believe you.

CLOTILDE.

[*At door.*] Beg pardon, but some one bring letter for—[*to BURR*] Monsieur.

BURR.

Leave it in my room.

CLOTILDE.

He say I must give it into Colonel Burr's hands.

[*Gives BURR letter and waits.*]

BURR.

[*To DOLLY.*] May I?

[*Opens the letter and reads.* DOLLY sits at spinet; plays very softly. BURR, after

reading letter, glances meaningly at DOLLY; starts as if to show her the letter, then gazes, as if lost in thought, into space. CLOTILDE waits in hall. Some seconds elapse.

CLOTILDE.

Monsieur [*nodding toward MESSENGER*], the messenger waits.

BURR.

There is no answer. Say, "No answer!"

[*Exit CLOTILDE.*]

DOLLY.

[*At spinet; speaking over her shoulder.*] She'll be heart-broken, poor thing! 'Tis the cruelest of answers, "There's no answer." Will she be at the dance?

BURR.

Who?

DOLLY.

[*Piqued.*] My eye and Betty Martin!

[*Pounds keyboard and rises as if to go.*]

BURR.

[*Intervening, shows "address" of letter.*] Is that a lady's script?

DOLLY.

Huh! Little I'd care —

BURR.

[*Drawing near to her.*] I wonder, sometimes, if you really care as little as you pretend.

DOLLY.

Sometimes, I wonder.

BURR.

[*Earnestly.*] Put away all question! I'll justify your faith! I love you. I adore you. I would stake my life for you, and I want you to believe, to-night, if never before!

DOLLY.

[*Lightly, as if to swerve him from his serious mood.*] Because Mr. Madison's calling?

BURR.

[*With a shrug.*] Perhaps —

DOLLY.

[*With fervor.*] You fear he might persuade me!

BURR.

No, but you might persuade yourself and — Dolly, never 'til this moment did I realize what a woman's love could mean to me.

DOLLY.

[*With fan-tap.*] You've turned forty, Ronnie. At that age it comes hard. Go 'long to the dance, she'll be waiting for you. [BURR *turns to go.*] Save one for me!

BURR.

[*Near exit, c.*] All—if you like!

DOLLY.

[*At R. corner of spinet.*] Just one—the first waltz, so she can't have it.

BURR.

Will you wait up till I return ?

DOLLY.

Not likely !

BURR.

I may be leaving on a long journey.

DOLLY.

To Mexico ?

BURR.

Or even further.—And I may want to tell you something.

[CLOTILDE at door L. *She is obviously agitated.*

DOLLY.

What, pray ?

BURR.

[*After slight pause of hesitation.*] Good-night !
[*Exit.*

CLOTILDE.

[*Entering as BURR exits. Excitedly.*] Madame !

DOLLY.

Yes !

CLOTILDE.

That letter was from —

DOLLY.

How dare you, girl !

CLOTILDE.

Oui, Madame, but—they have quarrel !

DOLLY.

Who ?

CLOTILDE.

Monsieur Burr an' Hamilton.

DOLLY.

[*Lightly.*] They always do.

CLOTILDE.

Not like thees, Madame. *Marie* say —

DOLLY.

[*With temper, and gesture of dismissal.*] *Allez !*
Didn't I forbid thee ever repeat *Marie's* chatter ?

CLOTILDE.

Oui, Madame.

[*Starts to go.*

DOLLY.

[*Recalling her when near exit.*] What did she
say ? What nonsense did she tell you ?

CLOTILDE.

[*Ominously.*] They fight, Madame.

DOLLY.

[*Incredulous.*] Fight ? You—mean—duel ?

CLOTILDE.

Oui, Madame. [*In half whisper.*] An' tees for
a lady !

DOLLY.

When ?

CLOTILDE.

It will be arrange soon Monsieur Burr arrive
New York.

DOLLY.

Where'd you learn all this?

CLOTILDE.

Marie. She hear at Madame Jumel's —

DOLLY.

Have you spoken with any one?

CLOTILDE.

[*Abashed.*] Madame — [Sniffles.]

DOLLY.

Answer!

CLOTILDE.

Alixé; Mr. Burr's man. I only ask him.

DOLLY.

He told you 'twas nonsense?

CLOTILDE.

Oui, Madame!

DOLLY.

Of course!

CLOTILDE.

But slap my face and say if I tell you, Madame, he cut my tongue out!

DOLLY.

Said that, did he?

CLOTILDE.

Oui, Madame, so I quick tell you!

[JENNINGS *at door c.*]

JENNINGS.

Mr. Madison.

DOLLY.

[*Panicky.*] Not at home! Yes, I am. Show him in. [*Exit* JENNINGS. *To* CLOTILDE.] Go next door. Have Mr. Burr called from the ball-room. Tell him Mrs. Todd will wait up till he returns. [CLOTILDE *exits* L. DOLLY *goes quickly to cabinet on desk R., near door; takes rouge-brush and mirror from drawer; rouges cheeks. Throughout ensuing scene DOLLY is obviously under nervous tension, knowing of impending duel; her gaiety a mask of her actual feeling.* JENNINGS *ushers in* MADISON. *To* MADISON, *quickly.*] There wasn't to call till Congress adjourns!

MADISON.

I come on behalf of Mr. Jefferson—to beg you'll join the dance.

DOLLY.

But—he knows I'm still in mourning.

MADISON.

[*Ruefully.*] Awkward!

DOLLY.

[*Sighing.*] Oh, being a widow isn't all cakes and ale!

MADISON.

[*Eagerly.*] The very mood he hoped to find you in!

DOLLY.

Lonely?

MADISON.

[*Nodding "yes."*] And perhaps you'd welcome a little diversion [*confidentially*], and give him chance to add his persuasions to mine. He's most anxious to announce, to-night, that his administration will be graced by a clever, serious woman.

DOLLY.

[*Protestingly.*] Ah, but I'm not a serious woman! Don't be taken in by my Quaker cap, sir. If I didn't keep it tied very tight [*pulling the cap-ribbons*] it wouldn't set straight. 'Tis only fair to warn thee. Thee knows me, sir, so little.

MADISON.

Except by reputation.

DOLLY.

Drat reputation! You've a reputation for being timid, and here you are ready to marry a woman you'd never known—only for her—ankle! I wouldn't marry a saint on his reputation!

[*DOLLY sits R. of table, L.*

MADISON.

That's a comfort, ma'am. He couldn't live up to it—with you.

DOLLY.

Heaven forbid he try! [*MADISON sits on couch R. C.*] 'Twould keep me fretting over my own imperfections. But why this lively concern of Mr. Jefferson in my answer?

MADISON.

[*Evasively.*] Well, I fancy, ma'am, he fears a Cabinet made up of widowers and bachelors might

prove unpopular; and if I, the youngest among them, can't find a wife [DOLLY turns her head], I feel I should decline the State portfolio.

DOLLY.

[With pretense of pique.] Well, I've given no thought to marrying a *portfolio*—of any quality! But if a wife is all that's wanting to complete Mr. Jefferson's Cabinet [rising], go ask Miss Floyd. [MADISON, disconcerted, rises.] She's at the dance, and now she's had enough of the forte-pianer, she may give ear to the banjo.

MADISON.

[Eagerly.] Dare I believe, ma'am, you're just a bit ——?

DOLLY.

[Interrupting; laughing.] Jealous? Me? Not the least! [With some show of anger.] But if you think to court me for campaign purposes, as a part of Mr. Jefferson's political policies, or a piece of furniture for the State Department ——

MADISON.

[Troubled.] But—my dear lady -

[Draws nearer.]

DOLLY.

[Warningly, in broken voice.] No, no! Don't urge thy answer—to-night!

MADISON.

[Earnestly.] Yes—to-night—this very hour—now—I want your promise!—To-morrow—or the day after—recall it if you choose!—But till then you are pledged to me!

DOLLY.

No! You must give me time—to think it over.

MADISON.

A year if you like—forever—if only meanwhile you marry me! [DOLLY protests, with gesture of refusal. With feeling.] And I dare assure you'll have no cause to regret it. All that my great love can do to make you happy, and all that my poor gifts can do to make your life splendid, I promise absolutely. And I only wish I could tell it you less bluntly and awkwardly.

DOLLY.

[Tearfully.] Faith! I've heard it done worse, sir; and I wonder how Miss Floyd — [With quick swerve to tone of gaiety.] Go find her, sir; she's entitled to another chance. She's come all the way from Long Island for no other purpose. And you'll own, sir, I was no better than a second choice. You'll see her at her best to-night—soft lights and music, and dancing, and—who knows? Once you have her in your arms again —

MADISON.

[Protesting.] Never, ma'am!

DOLLY.

But you will, to-night—in the waltz! And to that music! [She indicates tavern whence waltz music is heard faintly.] Just come from France!

MADISON.

[Rather sombrely.] My heels aren't up to that—to-night!

DOLLY.

The tune will carry 'em along, once you get it well in mind. [*Goes to spinet.*] Take the banjo; that will help.

[*MADISON takes the banjo; sits at table L.*

MADISON.

[*Tuning up.*] Give me *D*, please.

DOLLY.

You play by note or ear?

MADISON.

[*Lost in troubled thought.*] Yes—and—no.

DOLLY.

[*Impatient. Forming mouth as if to say "Damn"; then quickly.*] "D," you said, sir?

MADISON.

If you please.

[*Plays the banjo, to the accompaniment of the spinet.*

DOLLY.

The dance is very simple, sir. [*Comes down—illustrates the old-time waltz.*] Between a high-land-fling and a pigeon-wing. One—two—three; one—two—three. Once you're in the swing of it, your heels will fairly fly. [*Dances faster while MADISON swings his crossed leg in rhythm. She continues.*] One arm about thy partner,—so! 'Tis sometimes done with both, and if the floor be slippery, take care thee holds her tight.

MADISON.

[*Letting fall the banjo and rising eagerly.*] Let me try it, ma'am.

DOLLY.

By all means! [MADISON starts to put arm about her. She, drawing away.] No need of that!

MADISON.

"Hold tight"—you said.

DOLLY.

If the floor be slippery!

[*They execute a few waltz-steps at arm's length, and both counting, "One—two—three," etc. BURR appears at door.*

BURR.

I beg pardon —— [MADISON stops suddenly.

DOLLY.

[*To BURR.*] You left the ball early.

BURR.

[*Drolly.*] Evidently just in time.

MADISON.

[*Embarrassed.*] Mrs. Todd was showing me——

BURR.

[*With knowing nod.*] The first step in—diplomacy. But Mr. Jefferson tells me you may decline the State Portfolio.

MADISON.

Yes!

BURR.

Because your appointment is opposed?

[MADISON *tries to signal silence to* BURR.]

DOLLY.

[*Catching the move.*] Opposed—by whom?

MADISON.

Mr. Hamilton, chiefly

DOLLY.

But why, why?

BURR.

Because of me!

DOLLY.

[*To* MADISON.] But you've been friends, you and Hamilton!

MADISON.

[*Nodding assent.*] Until I stood up for Burr in the election-tie.

DOLLY.

[*Matter-of-fact tone.*] The day he brought you here?

MADISON.

My few words, in Burr's defense, enraged Hamilton, and he threatens to harass the administration if I am State Secretary.

DOLLY.

And that is why you decline the post? And not because you can't provide a lady for the State Department? You haven't been frank with me, sir!

MADISON.

I'm sure, ma'am, if you understood ——

DOLLY.

I quite understand.

MADISON.

My acceptance—Mr. Burr well knows—might embarrass—others.

BURR.

[*With meaning.*] Give yourself no uneasiness on that score. Mr. Hamilton, I promise, will give you no trouble.

MADISON.

If I felt sure of that ——

BURR.

[*Buoyantly.*] You may be! Hamilton and I have done with quarrels! Go tell the President you take the post.

MADISON.

[*Firmly.*] I will—[*after a troubled glance at DOLLY and BURR*] to-morrow.

DOLLY.

To-night, sir! Now!

MADISON.

[*After a pause.*] As you will, ma'am—always!
[*Kisses her hand. Moves to exit c.*]

DOLLY.

And the waltz. [*Repeats the dance-step.*] One—two—three!—You'll not forget?

MADISON.

[*With feeling.*] I fear not, dear lady!
[*Exit* MADISON.]

BURR.

Jim Madison! [*Imitates his waltz-step; then with a gesture of mock consternation.*] What a woman can make of a man!

DOLLY.

[*Gayly.*] Plenty tried their hands on you, and a nice cup of tea they've made of it—[*with sudden vehemence*] this time! [BURR *displays utter consternation.* DOLLY *continues tensely.*] You're going to fight Hamilton!

BURR.

[*Taken by surprise, his tone betrays the truth.*] Good God, ma'am!

DOLLY.

Thanks! I was 'fraid you'd deny it.

BURR.

You shouldn't know —

DOLLY.

But I *do*!

BURR.

From Madison?

DOLLY.

No!

BURR.

Then Pinckney?

DOLLY.

Beau Pinckney ?

BURR.

Put here to spy on me !

DOLLY.

Laws ! See how you—magnify ! You think yourselves so clever and careful. But put you at table with a pretty woman and some wine, and the rest of the world dissolves ; you're in the clouds—while your soul's secret goes below stairs with every empty bottle and change of plate.

BURR.

I'll deny what you've heard.

DOLLY.

Why ? Why should you deny it ?

BURR.

So that you may say I denied it—that you knew nothing of this.

DOLLY.

Why ! Why !—What am I in this quarrel 'tween you and Hamilton ?

BURR.

Nothing, nothing ! Only—well, he's determined to destroy me ! *[Spoken very lightly.]*

DOLLY.

[As if impatient.] So you've always said. And he of you ! You've been at each other's throats from the time you were boys with Washington.

BURR.

Whom he set against me!

DOLLY.

But no duel!

BURR.

[*With bitterness.*] He fought me for Governor
—for the Senate—

DOLLY.

No duel!

BURR.

[*Continuing.*] Kept me from the Presi-
dency—

DOLLY.

Politics! And still no duel!

BURR.

Now he turns the careless chatter of his own
dinner-table—to destroy me.

DOLLY.

[*As if skeptical.*] What can he do to “des-
troy” you?

BURR.

He says I’m a dangerous man!

DOLLY.

[*Bursting into ripple of laughter.*] And that’s
the reason for a duel? If ’twere, you’d have to
fight half the men in the United States—and all
the women! [*Rises.*] He’s always called you
“dangerous.”

BURR.

[*Lightly.*] Dangerous to the country. That I didn't mind—"Politics"—as you say. But now he becomes personal!

DOLLY.

[*Half in question.*] Who is she?

BURR.

[*Gesture of denial.*] No, no!

DOLLY.

[*Standing at right of table. Insisting.*] The truth! Who is she? Back of all the quarrels 'tween you two there's always been a she! 'Bove all the high-sounding phrases of politics and principles one could always hear the rustle of a petticoat. You've endured much from each other in public life. It's been give and take, in fairness and reason—and now, at the top of your careers, only one thing could bring you to the pistol point—and she's a —— [BURR startled into trying to silence her.] Oh, I can't say the word, 'cause I'm a Quaker, damn it! But it's twice too good for the French *hussy*. [BURR winces.] And you don't dare deny it! [BURR gestures helplessness.] And, but now, when you asked me to be your wife, you knew of this?

BURR.

[*Assenting.*] Yes.

DOLLY.

And with my word pledged to you, you would involve me in this wretched affair—of scandal—maybe tragedy?

BURR.

[*After slight pause, in matter-of-fact voice.*] Yes.

DOLLY.

Ronnie, was that fair, or honest, or decent?

BURR.

[*Matter-of-fact.*] No, it wasn't. But it was the *only* way. [*Tensely.*] And I want you!

DOLLY.

And want to make sure of me, before you leave on this errand, so that if you return—well, whatever happened, you knew I'd keep my word.

BURR.

And if I didn't return, you'd keep *me* [*hand on heart*] *here*, whoever called you wife.

DOLLY.

You are without shame, or conscience—without fear of God or man!

BURR.

[*Assenting.*] That much I love you!

DOLLY.

[*With growing excitement, almost to hysteria and tears.*] Then you will not do this mad thing—this wicked, stupid, silly — [BURR *attempts to interrupt.*] Yes, that's what it is, Ronnie Burr—a blunder that shames you—who've always called blunder worse than sin! And—[*with burst of laughter*] Lord, how they'll laugh at you!

BURR.

Laugh?

DOLLY.

[*Still laughing.*] Every one! To see you go to the devil, just as they always predicted—for a petticoat!

BURR.

So I would—any day—for the woman I love!
[*Approaches her.*]

DOLLY.

Yes, and take her to the devil with you, any day. But only for one day, and then you'd come back for another! You sha'n't do so with me!

BURR.

[*Overcome, betraying himself.*] Good God, can't you see, even now —

[*Moves to take her in his arms.*]

DOLLY.

[*Evading him; exultant.*] I knew it! Now we've the truth! I'm the quarrel 'tween you two.

BURR.

[*Denying.*] On my oath!

DOLLY.

[*Snapping her fingers.*] That for your oath! 'Gainst your every tone and look just now. And when I damned the woman, you didn't dare defend her, lest you betray yourself as *now*! Without that, I'd have known it! Madison opposed for office "because *Burr's* a dangerous man"! Who will doubt what that means? [*Indicates self.*] And that much you love me? You'd make that love a byword and scandal—and every finger point at me!

BURR.

[*Ominously.*] Oh, no! Not when I've done with Mr. Hamilton!

DOLLY.

You shall not! I forbid you!

BURR.

[*Quietly.*] There's no turning back now, not even for *you*. I must meet him.

DOLLY.

Meet him, yes, but with no harm to him.

BURR.

I should be a laughing-stock!

DOLLY.

Why? You've fought before and left your man unhurt. Foretold the very button you'd shoot from his coat—satisfied honor with mere *show* of your skill. And so you'll do now!

BURR.

Impossible.

[*Turns to go.*

DOLLY.

[*Brokenly.*] Then I'm done with you!

[*Crosses to desk.*

BURR.

[*Startled; turning.*] Dolly!

DOLLY.

[*Vehemently.*] Done with you, sir!

[*Sits at desk and writes.*

BURR.

[*After slight pause.*] And take Madison? He came for his answer?

DOLLY.

[*Spoken while writing letter.*] He went away without it! When I learned of this quarrel I made believe to be jealous—to avoid answer. Said he must wait till he'd seen his old flame. But now he shall have his answer!

[*Seals note; rings tap-bell on desk. Rises, goes to C. As she passes BURR he stops her.*]

BURR.

[*Taking note from her.*] You don't love him.

[*DOLLY looks at BURR, but does not answer; she is obviously dominated by him.*]

CLOTILDE.

[*At door.*] Madame?

BURR.

[*Quickly.*] Tell my man to make ready. We're leaving at once. [*Exit CLOTILDE. DOLLY moves as if to re-take letter. BURR crosses to fireplace, tears letter and throws it into grate.*] You—don't—love—him.

DOLLY.

I will—when you've gone. I shall—when you're not near me. When you are—— [*Hand across brow, as if to dispel charm.*] I'm little better than the rest, whom you make do as you bid.

[*A pause.*]

BURR.

[*With profound tenderness.*] And if I do now as you bid?

DOLLY.

[*Troubled.*] Why—why—[*suddenly*] come back for *your* answer!

BURR.

[*Laughing.*] Within the week!

DOLLY.

You will shoot to miss?

BURR.

Of course!

DOLLY.

At any risk to yourself?

BURR.

Word of honor! Wish me Godspeed!

DOLLY.

And speedy return—[BURR *moves as if to kiss her. She draws away*] if thee doesn't fail me!

BURR.

[*Ecstatically.*] "Fail you"? And lose all chance of you? I'd rather he killed me!

DOLLY.

So would I! [*Exit BURR. DOLLY, alone, listens to the faint music from the tavern mingling with the sleigh-bells of arriving guests. Rings. CLOTILDE enters.*] Lights out!

[*Goes to window in hall; opens it.*]

CLOTILDE.

Oui, Madame.

[*Snuffs candles. Advances to reading-light near fireplace.*]

DOLLY.

[*Coming down as CLOTILDE is about to extinguish light.*] No—leave that. I'll read—till the music stops.

CLOTILDE.

[*Nodding toward tavern.*] Tees gay to-night—the ball.

DOLLY.

Very!

[*Takes book from table. Sits in front of fire.*]

CLOTILDE.

Madame, now the Congress go 'way, there be rooms free, for new lodgers.

DOLLY.

[*Promptly.*] No, no! And if any apply, say Mrs. Todd no longer takes boarders. [*Exit CLOTILDE. DOLLY gazes abstractedly into the fire, the light of which illumines her face. The room in darkness, save for the reading lamp, and the moonlight, through hall window. From the tavern the music sounds somewhat louder in the silence of the scene. The candle-light flickers and finally sputters out. There is seen, at back, as if through a morning haze, a dumb-show of the duel between Burr and Hamilton, carried on in animated pantomime. At the drop of the kerchief, to signal*]

"Fire," the flash of the pistols is seen, but there is no sound. As Hamilton totters, Burr leaps toward him, his face showing utter surprise. The vision ceases abruptly. The hall window falls with a crash of broken panes. DOLLY, jumping to her feet, calls in tone of terror.] Clotilde!

[CLOTILDE enters quickly with lamp.

CLOTILDE.

Oui, Madame.

DOLLY.

That noise —— ?

CLOTILDE.

[Pointing to hall-window where the curtains are blowing.] The hall-window—it fall, Madame.

DOLLY.

[Passing hand over brow as if dazed.] Oh—is that all? I must have been ——

CURTAIN

THE THIRD ACT

SCENE.—*The red room of the President's Mansion, which came to be called the White House. Six months later. The walls are covered with crimson damask; the chairs and couches are of red brocade in frames of gilt. Floor waxed and polished to the point of reflection. Two large chandeliers of rock crystal are suspended by red silk cords. At back, on either side of the elaborate marble mantel, are double doors that lead into the main corridor of the house. At right and left of scene are smaller mantels, with doors on either side leading into various apartments—the Cabinet-Room, the President's office, etc. Over the mantel at back is the life-size portrait of George Washington, painted by Gilbert Stuart. Over the mantels at left and right are mirrors. Down stage, right and left, busts of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette on tall pedestals.*

The Foreign Ministers and their ladies, together with MADISON and PINCKNEY, are assembled at rise of curtain. They are chatting audibly, animatedly, so that a confused murmur of speech reaches the audience. In the hall, just beyond the doors at back, R. and L., stand FOOTMEN in the Jefferson livery. DE VAUX, the Major-Domo, at door R., back. String music, not too audible above the chatter,

throughout opening of act. The guests move about, informally, to the doors R. and L., as if surveying the adjoining apartments. In one of the latter is seen bowl of punch and silver goblets on table. The Ministers of Russia and of Turkey figure mutely among the other diplomats.

PICHON.

[*He lorgnettes bust of Louis XVI on pedestal. Churlishly to MADISON.*] Mr. Secretary!

MADISON.

[*Coming down.*] Monsieur Pichon!

PICHON.

Who have you here?

MADISON.

Your former king, Louis XVI, whose war-ships helped us at Yorktown. He gave America this head.

PICHON.

[*With gesture of beheading.*] He gave France his own. [*Icily.*] Napoleon's envoy [*indicating himself*] did not expect to meet him here! [*Angrily.*] Nor Sir Anthony Merry!

MADISON.

[*Affecting surprise.*] British Minister?

PICHON.

But France and England at war!

MADISON.

[*Appeasingly.*] Forget it—during dinner.

[*A voice off, announcing.* MADISON *turns to go.*

PICHON.

[*Intervening, sotto voce.*] The President, of course, takes in my wife!

MADISON.

He couldn't do better!

DE VAUX.

[*At door back; announcing.*] Minister from the Netherlands and Vrou Van Berckel.

[*They enter—figures of cheer and dignity. In look and dress like Rembrandt portraits.*

MADISON.

[*Greeting.*] Madame!

VAN BERCKEL.

We are late, but the storm!

MADISON.

[*Assenting.*] Yes, bad driving to get here.

VAN BERCKEL.

[*Cheerily.*] We came in a poat!—De streets are canals!

MADISON.

Like in Holland?

VAN BERCKEL.

Makes us feel at home!

ENA.

[*Coming down from PINCKNEY, to VROU VAN BERCKEL.*] My sister, Lady Merry's often spoken of you.

VROU VAN BERCKEL.

[*Beaming.*] So?

ENA.

And how d'ye like it here?

VROU VAN BERCKEL.

So!

ENA.

[*Rapturously.*] Isn't it fascinatin'? I've been gay as a grig since landin'! Lost my heart completely!

VROU VAN BERCKEL.

[*With a smile.*] So?

ENA.

The country, and people! Every one so civil—not the least like report.

VROU VAN BERCKEL.

Unt Laty Merry is vell?

ENA.

Her usual self. I'll fetch her. [*Goes up.*]

VAN BERCKEL.

[*Gesture of despair.*] Dondervetter! [*Crosses quickly to VROU VAN BERCKEL.*] Rememper—mit Laty Merry—[*finger on lips*] silenzio!

VROU VAN BERCKEL.

[*Same business.*] So!

VAN BERCKEL.

Unt vat she says [*tapping right and left ear*] in—unt—out!

VROU VAN BERCKEL.

[*Nodding assent.*] So!

LADY MERRY.

[*Her voice heard in tone of complaint as she comes down.*] I'll swear our horses swam here! [*Greets VAN BERCKEL.*] How d'ye do, Mynheer? We haven't met since Madrid.

VAN BERCKEL.

You hafen't changed, ma'am.

LADY MERRY.

I'm here only a week! [*To VROU VAN BERCKEL.*] And you here, too! You poor thing! How'd that happen?

VROU VAN BERCKEL.

Mynheer vas promoted.

LADY MERRY.

Promoted? From Madrid!—to this God-for-saken swamp? The place fairly reeks of agues and alligators and things. All one's life is worth to put foot out-of-doors. [*Confidentially.*] I say, d'you suppose it's some deep game of this President fellow to kill us off? What?—No? He's full of those bloodthirsty French ideas! Everybody free and equal! You'll dine to-night with a bar-maid!

VROU VAN BERCKEL.

So?

ENA.

[*Horriſted.*] Angie!

LADY MERRY.

Well, perhaps not exactly —

ENA.

[*Interrupting ; rather breathless with anger ; to VROU VAN BERCKEL.*] Mrs. Todd—was good enough—to receive us—in her Philadelphia home—for a time—as *guests*.

LADY MERRY.

Paying guests! You know, the old tune. “Gentlewoman, reduced circumstances, will receive a few paying guests, if properly introduced.” Mr. Burr introduced Tony — [*Fans herself vigorously and hums meaningly the tune of “Mary Was a Housemaid.”*] H’m—what? Oh, I thought you said something. [VROU VAN BERCKEL promptly shakes head “no.” ENA walks about nervously, obviously annoyed.] That’s the worst of being diplomat’s wife! We’re tongue-tied! Though Lord knows it’s no secret. [ENA anxiously pulls at LADY MERRY’S frock.] Don’t fidget, Ena! She’d have married the rake only for his killing that man Hamilton. And on her account, too! Now she’ll likely take that Mr. Maddington, to stop vicious —

ENA.

[*Interrupting ; to VROU VAN BERCKEL.*] Where’s your Legation?

VROU VAN BERCKEL.

[*Dubiously.*] In a—kind of a house.

LADY MERRY.

Like ours, I suppose—a hut!

VAN BERCKEL.

[*Promptly, and after sign of silence to his wife.*]
But in de most beautiful street in de city—
[*indicating spacious vistas*] statues, fountains,
sunken gartens, colonnades—magnifique!

LADY MERRY.

[*Eagerly.*] In God's name, where is it?

VAN BERCKEL.

Vell, ees yet only on de map!

LADY MERRY.

On the map! Our Legation has a pump on the map, but not on the premises! Fancy, not even a pump! We'll file to the river for a morning tub—like Indians.

VAN BERCKEL.

Our house is most confenient. Excellent duck-shooting in de back yart; and partridges unt squails. And ven de river's high a little, goot fishing von de parlor vindow.

ENA.

How jolly!

LADY MERRY.

For a shooting-box—not a capital!

VAN BERCKEL.

Of course, ees not yet! But ven ees once—has efery advantages.

LADY MERRY.

What, pray?

VAN BERCKEL.

[*Puzzled for answer.*] Um—vell—for one ting, de best oysters in Vashington I efer eat!

LADY MERRY.

[*Rising.*] Oysters—and diplomats!

VAN BERCKEL.

Vell, a good diplomat can learn someting from a good oyster!

[*Takes his wife's arm, moves up stage.*]

DE VAUX.

[*Announcing.*] The Minister from Turkey! [*The MINISTER FROM TURKEY enters, followed by tiny negro, carrying narghile, Turkish pipe. The MINISTER elaborately disregards the women; crosses L., sits cross-legged on divan, and proceeds to smoke. DE VAUX to LADY MERRY as she passes him.*] This room, ma'am [*pointing to room R.*], contains portraits of the Signers of the Declaration of Inde—[*LADY MERRY turns away impatiently*] and a collection of stuffed birds. President's own hand-work!

LADY MERRY.

[*To MERRY.*] Come, Tony, we'll look at the stuffed birds!

[*Exit with ENA.*]

MERRY.

[*Coming down with PINCKNEY. To MADISON in tone of affected surprise.*] Mr. Pinckney informs me Pichon is dining here!

MADISON.

French Chargé—of course!

MERRY.

Our countries are fighting!

MADISON.

[*Appeasingly.*] They may have stopped—for dinner.

MERRY.

Possibly! [*Starts to go R. Stops.*] The President, I anticipate, takes in my wife.

MADISON.

[*Same tone as to PICHON.*] He couldn't do better.

MERRY.

[*To PINCKNEY.*] Lady Merry accepts the honor. I promise him!

[*Exit MERRY. PINCKNEY and MADISON disconcerted.*]

PINCKNEY.

He means "command." And President will resent his "high-horse."

MADISON.

Merry knows that. He's riding for a fall. [*As if struck with sudden idea.*] All the better for us

—if he stumbles over some such trifle as a point of dinner-etiquette.

D'YRUJO.

[*Coming down ; with subtlety.*] Does to-day's company include Mr. Burr ?

MADISON.

The Vice-President is in the South ; since his tragic meeting with Mr. Hamilton he's been there.

D'YRUJO.

[*Ironically.*] For his health ?

PINCKNEY.

[*Quickly.*] Hunting expedition, his friends report—for big game.

D'YRUJO.

Yes—Mexico ! [MADISON *startled.*] Isn't that the game he's after ? To take Mexico from Spain ?

MADISON.

[*Dismissingly.*] Of course we've heard rumors.

D'YRUJO.

[*Derisively.*] “Rumors” ! Mr. Burr “hunts” with three thousand rifles, crack-shots every man of them ! And you hear only—rumors !

MADISON.

[*After slight pause.*] Whatever Mr. Burr's plans, Spain's rights are safe. I pledge you our good faith.

D'YRUJO.

Prove it! Tell the British Minister pack his trunks! [MADISON *gestures protest.*] He is Burr's ally—has been at every step—from the first—at Madam Todd's!

MADISON.

We have no proof!

D'YRUJO.

We have—proof enough! In Lady Merry's gossip.

MADISON.

[*With a smile.*] God forbid, sir, we hang the peace of nations on a woman's tongue! [*Soberly.*] And surely you, a seasoned diplomat, familiar with this lady's—eccentricities—can appreciate Mr. Jefferson's embarrassments—and mine.

D'YRUJO.

[*Assenting, cordially.*] Yours, I've every wish to lighten, but—— [*With finality.*] Sir Anthony gets his passports, or I take mine! [*To PINCKNEY.*] Mr. Jefferson can choose!

[*Starts to go.*]

PINCKNEY.

[*Halting him; with deference.*] Mr. Madison—is Secretary of State.

D'YRUJO.

[*Recalling Hamilton's words, the cause of the duel.*] Yes—but “Mr. Burr is a dangerous man”!

DE VAUX.

[*Announcing.*] Mrs. Todd!

[D'YRUJO bows and exits as DOLLY enters.

DOLLY wears Quaker costume of white lace.

DOLLY.

[*Rather to PINCKNEY.*] Sorry I'm so late, but my coach broke down in those dreadful roads from Georgetown. [MADISON gazes at DOLLY, obviously troubled.] You're disturbed, sirs. What is it?
[*Looks after D'YRUJO.*

MADISON.

[*Flustered.*] Why—why —— [Helpless.

PINCKNEY.

[*Jumping in.*] 'Tis this dinner that troubles us. The first time foreign Governments dine here.

DOLLY.

They'll feed well enough!

MADISON.

These Embassies make it an affair-of-State! To establish, to-day, for all time, the diplomatic etiquette of the White House.

PINCKNEY.

Who goes first, second, and so on.

DOLLY.

But they know Mr. Jefferson's views on the vanities of rank and title.

MADISON.

The British Minister virtually demands his wife go first—on President's arm.

DOLLY.

Well, why not she as well as any other ?

PINCKNEY.

But Pichon asks the same for his wife !

DOLLY.

[*Nodding toward President's room.*] Well, the man has two arms ! He takes in both ladies. [PINCKNEY, *as if accepting the solution, makes to exit: recalling.*] One minute, Beau—before the review. [*Points to President's room.*] Pas trop gai ? [*Indicates her attire in general.*

PINCKNEY.

Charmante !

DOLLY.

[*Adjusting head-dress, as she glances in mirror.*] And my coiffure ?

PINCKNEY.

Most becoming.

MADISON.

[*Looking into space.*] Work of art !

DOLLY.

And the robe ?

PINCKNEY.

Ravissante !

MADISON.

[*Same business.*] Work of art !

DOLLY.

Thanks! President suggested something
 "plain." And—[*tapping cheek*] my color?
 [PINCKNEY *blows kiss of admiration.*

MADISON.

[*Still looking into space.*] Work of art!

DOLLY.

Rouge! Not a bit! President said I shouldn't.
 And I'll have color to spare when Lady Merry
 gets at me! [PINCKNEY *exits to President's room.*
Drawing nearer. Rubs cheek.] See! But you're
 not looking at me. [MADISON *nods "yes."*] No!
 You're looking straight through me. And your
 thoughts a thousand miles away! D'Yrujo sent
 them there. He left you as I came in. And he's
 been saying —— ?

MADISON.

[*Appeasingly.*] Not now! To-day you need
 all your wits—and peace-of-mind.

DOLLY.

Hang my peace-of-mind! There's vastly more
 at stake than that! Else why am I here—on this
 occasion of State? Why should Mr. Jefferson
 choose me before scores of other women—better
 graced than I am—to do the honors of his com-
 pany, were it not to give the lie to calumnies, and
 proclaim his confidence in you?—'Tis no kindness,
 sir, to keep it from me—and no use! For I know
 —from Sally.

MADISON.

[*With mock despair.*] Diplomat's wife!

DOLLY.

Before that, my friend! And tells me only what she must in fairness—to you!—The talk in the Embassies ——

MADISON.

[*Dismissingly.*] Lady Merry's chatter!

DOLLY.

[*Insisting.*] And her husband's belief, shared by his colleagues, that whatever folly, or madness, Burr is engaged in, you will shut your eyes to it!

MADISON.

[*Quickly, and as if suddenly impelled by emotion.*] Would you wish me to ——?

DOLLY.

[*Interrupting.*] I beg of you ——

MADISON.

[*Insisting; drawing nearer.*] Would you have me—shut my eyes?

DOLLY.

If it blind thee to honor, no! But I wish him only well.

MADISON.

And I—for your sake!

DOLLY.

Take no thought of me, sir; nor of him; nor of any but thyself!

MADISON.

[*Seriously.*] The nation, ma'am!

DOLLY.

A woman doesn't think in "nations"! Her nation, her world, her universe is one man.

[Enter PINCKNEY from President's room.]

PINCKNEY.

President begs Mrs. Todd's attendance.

DOLLY.

[Turning to exit.] His study?

PINCKNEY.

Dining-room—to place the guests. And please put me near Miss Ferrar. [Exit DOLLY. PINCKNEY crosses to MADISON.] There's a post—just arrived—from England.

MADISON.

[Making as if to cross.] I'll go at once.

PINCKNEY.

[Detaining him.] Might better wait, President says, 'til the company's gone.

MADISON.

Anything disturbing?

PINCKNEY.

He says "no," but he's called for his fiddle!

[The guests gradually emerge into view, in hall and corridors.]

MADISON.

[As ENA reënters.] Have you asked Miss Ferrar?

PINCKNEY.

Yes—and—no!

MADISON.

Right! You've no time to lose.

PINCKNEY.

[*Crossing to ENA.*] We're in luck; Mrs. Todd will place us at table.

ENA.

I go in with the Vice-President, Angie says.

PINCKNEY.

[*Laughing.*] Mr. Burr's a thousand miles away!

ENA.

He was with Sir Tony an hour since.

PINCKNEY.

[*Amazed.*] Impossible!

ENA.

[*Insisting.*] But I saw him!

PINCKNEY.

You must have mistaken!

ENA.

No. They had high words, because Tony's letters to the king——

PINCKNEY.

[*Breaking in.*] I've heard nothing you've said, but I'm sure you're mistaken.

ENA.

[*Catching his meaning.*] Oh, perhaps I am——

[PINCKNEY *nods approval.*] Yes—of course I'm mistaken. I didn't see Mr. Burr, since you say so.

PINCKNEY.

Thanks! You'll make an ideal wife for a diplomat, won't you?

ENA.

[*Smiling.*] I'll try my best—my level best—though Angie will never give consent.

PINCKNEY.

Then the only thing is—not to ask it.

[*The guests reënter.*]

LADY MERRY.

[*To PINCKNEY, who approaches her as she enters.*] The stuffed birds are most exciting, but we'd like a glimpse of our host.

PINCKNEY.

The President's engaged, for the moment, with Mrs. Todd.

LADY MERRY.

[*To SALLY, nose in air.*] Fancy! Kept waiting by your former landlady! [*Seeing MADAME PICHON and indicating. To SALLY.*] That's the French Legation?

SOPHIA.

[*Turning sharply, bows assent.*] Oui, Madame.

LADY MERRY.

[*Taken aback.*] Vous comprenez Anglais?

SOPHIA.

[*Rather sharply.*] Parfaitement, Madame.

LADY MERRY.

Our countries have come to blows—but we needn't!

SOPHIA.

[*Amiably.*] Not 'til we're better acquainted.

LADY MERRY.

Your English quite good! Where'd you pick it up?

SOPHIA.

Philadelphia.

LADY MERRY.

Phila——! Good heavens—you're not American?

SOPHIA.

Yes.

LADY MERRY.

Oh, you poor child! How'd that happen?

SOPHIA.

My people "happened" over here some hundred years ago.

LADY MERRY.

Damme! I thought only Indians had been here that long!

[LADY MERRY sweeps across stage to R., joining SIR ANTHONY and ENA.]

SOPHIA.

[*As a parting shot.*] You English were here longer!

[*Enter DOLLY from President's room. The audible chatter of the guests is silenced on*

her appearance. Elaborate courtesies from all except SIR ANTHONY and LADY MERRY, who bow stiffly. The general murmur of conversation resumes as DOLLY moves briskly from group to group, to greet the company.

DOLLY.

[To VROU VAN BERCKEL.] So glad you're here. President feared storm might detain you. [*Admiringly. Sotto-voce.*] And your robe! Ausgezeichnet!

VROU VAN BERCKEL.

[*Beaming.*] So?

DOLLY.

[To SOPHIA.] So glad you're here. President feared storm might detain you. [*Admiringly.*] And your robe! Paris, of course!

SOPHIA.

[*Nodding "yes."*] And the customs brutes made ma pay duties. Hundred dollars!

DOLLY.

[*Indicating SOPHIA'S extreme décolleté.*] And for next to nothing! [*Behind her fan.*] When President sees you he'll make 'em refund it.

[*They turn up stage.*]

D'YRUJO.

[*Coming down to PICHON.*] Madame Pichon is charming!

PICHON.

One require something—in such a place! Ev'ry

night I ask heaven what have I done that I must live in such a city ?

D'YRUJO.

[*In French.*] *Courage!* [*Sotto-voce.*] It won't last!

PICHON.

[*Disgustedly.*] Bah! Napoleon says "yes"; that the Providence that takes care of children and blind folks takes care of the United States!

DOLLY.

[*Greeting the MERRYS.*] So glad you've arrived! President feared storm might keep you 'way. [*To ENA.*] You won't mind, dear, but I had to place you at table next Mr. Pinckney.

ENA.

[*With furtive hand-clasp.*] Thank you, ma'am.

LADY MERRY.

[*Cattishly.*] Seems you've the run of the cellar here!

DOLLY.

[*Apologetic.*] I count on your indulgence!

LADY MERRY.

[*With fan-tap.*] Fal-lal! You're accustomed to entertaining! I've been telling Vrou Van Berckel, your house in Philadelphia, so well ordered, quite unlike a public inn. You still take boarders?

DOLLY.

[*Sweetly.*] Not since you, ma'am! You were the last! I couldn't endure the thought that others might disturb the memories of *thy* visit. [*Nods*

toward other room.] Have you seen the stuffed birds?

LADY MERRY.

Yes—and the portraits. [*Nose in air.*] I prefer the birds!

DOLLY.

Tell that to the President—you'll be friends at once.

LADY MERRY.

[*Lorgnetting Washington's portrait.*] This is the gentleman we dine with—Mr. Jefferings?

DOLLY.

That is General Washington, ma'am—painted by Gilbert Stuart.

LADY MERRY.

[*With a spiteful laugh.*] Oh, is it, though? Still, they all looked pretty much alike, I've heard our officers say.

DOLLY.

Perhaps, at a running glance!

LADY MERRY.

[*Disconcerted; still lorgnetting.*] This one looks a bit of a gentleman.

DOLLY.

Quite a bit, ma'am. Six foot three!

LADY MERRY.

Much family?

DOLLY.

No children at all!

LADY MERRY.

Oh—poor man! [*Sotto-voce.*] How'd that happen?

DOLLY.

[*With feeling.*] We believe posterity left him childless that his country might call him father!

LADY MERRY.

[*As if enlightened.*] Oh! That's how it ——! Extraordinary interference in one's family affairs!
[*Sweeps up stage to SIR ANTHONY.*]

SALLY.

[*Advancing quickly to DOLLY; imitating her.*] So glad you've arrived. President feared storm might detain you. And your robe ——!

DOLLY.

[*Sotto-voce.*] Traitor! [*To D'YRUJO.*] You see, Marquis, she has all my State secrets!

D'YRUJO.

[*With meaning.*] She must give you mine—in exchange!
[*D'YRUJO crosses.*]

DOLLY.

[*Taking alarm.*] What is it?

SALLY.

[*Sotto-voce.*] Burr has returned!

DOLLY.

[*Grasping SALLY'S arm.*] No!

SALLY.

Promise you'll not see him!

DOLLY.

[*With forced gaiety, as MADISON approaches.*] No—no—this isn't the gown from Paris. President didn't wish me to wear it.

SALLY.

Afraid of pneumonia? [*Indicating low corsage.*

MADISON.

Newspapers! We must all patronize home industries.

DOLLY.

[*To SALLY.*] So I'll have it made over. Didn't fit, anyway.

DE VAUX.

[*Announcing.*] Dinner is served!

[*General movement among company; and the familiar, awkward moment of waiting for a couple to "lead off."*

LADY MERRY.

[*Behind fan to MERRY.*] See I go first!
[*Turns to SALLY.*] My husband takes you in.

SALLY.

Honored!

LADY MERRY.

After President and me.

SALLY.

Thank you.

LADY MERRY.

[*To VROU VAN BERCKEL.*] I'm famished!
What'll we get here?

VROU VAN BERCKEL.

[*Blankly.*] Dinner.

LADY MERRY.

Barbecue, I wager!

VROU VAN BERCKEL.

So?

VAN BERCKEL.

[*Sharply.*] Vrou Van Ber——

[*He comes down.*]

VROU VAN BERCKEL.

[*Turning quickly.*] Mynheer?

[*Crosses from* LADY MERRY *to husband.*]

VAN BERCKEL.

[*Sotto-voce.*] De less you say to det English bullfinch v'ile ve are here, de more I von't say to you ven ve go von here.

VROU VAN BERCKEL.

I sayt only "so."

VAN BERCKEL.

Dot's too much!

[*Turns, saunters up stage, still keeping an eye on* VROU VAN BERCKEL.

DOLLY.

[*Coming down.*] Dinner's announced. What are we waiting for?

LADY MERRY.

Our host!

DOLLY.

Mr. Jefferson meets his company at table.

LADY MERRY.

[*With forced gaiety.*] We're dining with the President, not Mr. Jefferings.

DOLLY.

[*As if to dismiss the question.*] He makes no ceremony of his office.

MERRY.

We do of ours!

PICHON.

This dinner is a formality!

LADY MERRY.

Not a pleasure! [*After a nudge from ENA.*] Merely!

DOLLY.

The only formality here is informality. Mr. Jefferson makes every guest at his table the equal of every other.

MERRY.

Once at his table, perhaps. But who goes first?

DOLLY.

No one!

PICHON.

We go *pele-mele*?

DOLLY.

[*Assenting.*] The custom of the country, to which the President adheres; gentlemen en-masse give place to ladies en-masse in passing out.

[*She nods toward dining-room.*]

MERRY.

Our ladies might come at the end of the—
masse!

DOLLY.

Our ladies must—at the English court.

LADY MERRY.

[*With rising temper.*] But, if only to avoid a
polite riot, some one goes first!

DOLLY.

[*Nodding assent with a gesture toward door.*]
Whoever happens nearest the door.

LADY MERRY.

[*With gesture of elbowing.*] And has the sharp-
est elbows.

PICHON.

Or the rudest manners!

DOLLY.

But we're such a small party!

PICHON.

[*With suppressed anger—to MADISON.*] It might
“happen” [*indicating VAN BERCKEL*] Holland
go before—Napoleon! [*Indicating himself.*]

MERRY.

Or a Chargé-d’Affaires before a Minister-Pleni-
potentiary!

D’YRUJO.

Or a mere Minister before a titled Ambassador!

MADISON.

Mr. Jefferson ignores all courtly forms as foreign to our people and institutions.

MERRY.

We should have been apprised! But Mr. Jefferson knows what he's about! Pretense of ignorance only aggravates the offense. He was four years Minister at the brilliant Court of Louis XVI—[*pointing to marble bust and glaring at PICHON, who turns his back*] when France was still a polite nation. I am sure he learned there the amenities of diplomatic rank.

LADY MERRY.

[*To DOLLY.*] If not, then Mr. Maddington, his Minister for Foreign Affairs——

DOLLY.

[*Smiling.*] Foreign affairs *only*, Lady Merry; his domestic affairs Mr. Jefferson orders himself.

[*A NEGRO COOK, in white cap and apron of his calling, appears at door of dining-room.*

THE COOK.

[*At door; announcing.*] Ladies an' gent'men! Marsa Jefferson's dinnah's gettin' cold!

[*Exit COOK. The TURKISH MINISTER, throughout the turmoil, sits composedly puffing the narghile. At sight of the negro cook he rises abruptly and exits to dining-room, with his attendant. JEFFERSON'S violin heard.*

PINCKNEY.

[*Entering from President's room; to DOLLY sotto-voce.*] He's in towering rage, his dinner kept waiting. Says they may go as they choose, but if they don't go in they'll go without! And to tell them straight — [Turns to cross.]

DOLLY.

[*In alarm.*] Lord, no! 'Twould undo everything. [*Pauses to gather her wits; then to the others.*] My dear friends, the President's first solicitude is the satisfaction of his guests, and he begs you'll compose the matter for yourselves, who goes first, second or last.

PICHON.

[*Coming down.*] Admirable!
[*Offers his arm to DOLLY.*]

MERRY.

Reasonable!

[*Same business. D'YRUJO comes down. All three stand over DOLLY, offering escort.*]

DOLLY.

[*At sign of "no" from MADISON.*] But I can't go with all Europe!

D'YRUJO.

[*Offering his arm.*] Spain goes first!

MERRY.

[*Intervening.*] By what right?

D'YRUJO.

This dinner began in the caravals of Columbus, built by Spanish gold.

VAN BERCKEL.

[*Nodding assent, jovially.*] Vich dey took from Holland!

MERRY.

[*To D'YRUJO.*] You forget the English sloop, Mayflower——

PICHON.

[*To MERRY.*] And you the French war-ships at Yorktown!

VAN BERCKEL.

Ach! On your poats ve'll nefer get dinner!

MERRY.

Pray, don't wait on me. [*Turns as if to exit.*]

PICHON.

[*Same business.*] Nor me!

[*SOPHIA halts him.*]

MADISON.

[*Appealing.*] I beg of you—gentlemen!

PICHON.

[*Excitedly.*] We are, to-day, not gentlemen—governments!

MERRY.

[*To PICHON.*] There'd been one less, had I known you dine here to-day!

PICHON.

[*Explosively.*] 'Tees not I who dine here to-day, but thirty meelion Frenchmen!

[*Turns up stage.*]

VAN BERCKEL.

[*To the others, jovially.*] Let us go in before dey do! Ve get nothing—after dirty million Frenchmen!

[*Turns to follow the others.*]

MERRY.

[*Recalling him; rebukingly.*] Mynheer, Holland has diplomatic dignities, small as she is!

VAN BERCKEL.

[*Soberly.*] Und small as she is, Holland is too big for such a quarrel!

[*The Ministers and their ladies move up stage, in a gradually closing group; they discuss the situation in a confused murmur; tones and gestures and occasional exclamations—some, in foreign language—evince their temper and excitement. They approach door R. led by the MERRYS as if to exit; but pause and turn with indications of changed purpose, at sound of JEFFERSON'S violin. MADISON utterly disconcerted; DOLLY all smiles of satisfaction.*]

MADISON.

[*Sotto-voce, to DOLLY.*] Lord! We've set them wrangling 'mong themselves!

DOLLY.

[*Pleased. Turning to PINCKNEY.*] Tell the President!
[*Exit PINCKNEY.*]

MADISON.

[*Starting toward them.*] Gentlemen!

DOLLY.

[*Holding him back.*] No—no—no!

MADISON.

But hear them—Merry and Pichon!

DOLLY.

[*Complacently.*] Composing the matter—for themselves!

MADISON.

[*Alarmed.*] But, dear lady, they're fighting—snarling like——

DOLLY.

Kilkenny cats! Just what *he* planned!
[*Nods toward President's room.*]

MADISON.

This disturbance?

DOLLY.

[*Correcting.*] Diversion—he calls it. Diplomatic diversion. [*As the wrangling up stage increases.*] Works to a miracle!

MADISON.

[*In final alarm, as guests move to exit.*] But—they're leaving.

[*Makes as if to cross to President's room.*]

PINCKNEY.

[*At door.*] Ladies and gentlemen! [*All instantly quiet.* PINCKNEY advances to c.] The President awaits you at table. He begs Mrs. Todd show the way.

DOLLY.

[*Crossing to* LADY MERRY; *with intention.*] Shall we go?

[*Amid laughter and chatter, and with DOLLY leading, all move toward door to dining-room, excepting MERRY, who remains rooted, down R.*]

MERRY.

[*Calling.*] Angela! [LADY MERRY follows, at some distance, the other ladies as they advance, en-masse, toward dining-room. MERRY, commandingly.] Lady Merry!

LADY MERRY.

[*Turning, comes down.*] Yes?

MERRY.

You're not going in?

LADY MERRY.

[*Protestingly.*] I'm hungry!

MERRY.

[*In low tone, with wrath.*] Remain!

[*Others exit, laughing and chatting animatedly, into dining-room.*]

DE VAUX.

[*At the door, looking into dining-room, then*

toward the MERRYS in perplexity ; after a pause.]
Pardon, sir.

MERRY.

Well ?

DE VAUX.

President's at table.

MERRY.

[*With a gesture.*] Close ! [*DE VAUX exits, closing door.* MERRY turns to SERVANT at door R.]
My carriage !

LADY MERRY.

[*Snappishly.*] And wait for it ?

MERRY.

All the better to give that savage his lesson !

LADY MERRY.

[*Explosively.*] Yes ! That was the last straw !
His Majesty preceded by—Dolly Todd !

MERRY.

En-masse, and pêle-mêle !

LADY MERRY.

Very free with their nasty French !

MERRY.

They'll pay for it ! I'll smash their tuppenny Republic ! All Europe saw this insult.

LADY MERRY.

And shared it with us !

MERRY.

[*Gesture of protest.*] England shares nothing with any one. This slight was aimed at us alone. And yet you'd have gone in!

LADY MERRY.

[*Shrilly.*] Hell's bales! Nothing since breakfast but a cup of chocolate! [*Walks about nervously.*] Then bumped and jolted 'til my bones cracked, to get here. And now, no dinner!
[*Plumps into chair.*]

MERRY.

There are more important things than dinner!

LADY MERRY.

Not when you haven't got it!

MERRY.

Would His Majesty dine after such —— ?

LADY MERRY.

[*Jumping in.*] Bah! Take more than that to keep King George from his dinner. I've seen him eat! [*Pulls bell-cord.*] Where's that coach? Come, we'll walk.

MERRY.

Those streets—we'd drown!

LADY MERRY.

We can't stop here—without some reason or excuse!

MERRY.

We'll say you've fainted.

LADY MERRY.

So I shall—from hunger !

MERRY.

Then do ! [*Gestures, slightly, as of a fall.*]

LADY MERRY.

Pretty figure I'd cut !

MERRY.

Figure or no !

LADY MERRY.

Hell's bales ! I'm in hoops, man !

[*Gesture as of upturning hoops.*]

MERRY.

[*Sputtering.*] Well—well—then—you've taken cold—the rain—you've taken cold !

LADY MERRY.

Like enough !

[*Shudders.*]

MERRY.

[*Taking snuff.*] Then be good enough to sneeze ! [*LADY MERRY sneezes faintly.*] Near the door—so they'll hear. [*Half opens door.*] LADY MERRY sneezes slightly. MERRY, angrily.] I said sneeze, ma'am—not snuffle ! [*He sneezes vociferously.*] That sort !

LADY MERRY.

[*Hands on hips.*] I won't answer for my stays, but I'll do my best for you.

MERRY.

[*In a rage.*] For me ! I don't ask you to

sneeze for me, madam! You're sneezing for His Majesty!
 [Takes pinch of snuff.]

LADY MERRY.

[After sneezing vigorously.] There!—for King George!

MERRY.

God save him!

LADY MERRY.

And my stays! [As if discovering broken stays.] There! I knew it! You might have anticipated this.

MERRY.

Anticipate—this stroke of luck! That gives me free hand with Burr! England wants merely excuse for war! This Mrs. Todd provides a cause.

LADY MERRY.

Clever man!

[Sneezes. Enter DE VAUX, followed by FOOTMAN with a silver tray, on which are two silver goblets, a bottle of champagne, a dish of cakes.]

DE VAUX.

President's compliments!

[FOOTMAN pours wine, exits.]

MERRY.

We're taking leave, say to Miss Ferrar.

[DE VAUX bows and exits.]

LADY MERRY.

[After sniffing the wine.] Damme!

MERRY.

[*In alarm.*] What is it?

LADY MERRY.

Champagne! The beggars drinking champagne!
[*Offers the goblet.*]

MERRY.

[*Refusing.*] I'd choke first! [*Picks up bottle and looks at label.*] Cuvee '99—two guineas the bottle! That's Mr. Jefferson's simplicity—the humbug!

LADY MERRY.

[*Sipping the wine.*] No humbug about his champagne! I've had worse at St. James' Palace. Tony, I wonder if we're doing these people injustice?

MERRY.

[*Indignant; very quickly.*] What?

LADY MERRY.

Well, they can't be such lumpkins with this in their cellars.
[*Starts to fill glass.*]

MERRY.

[*Thunderingly.*] Angela! [*She puts down bottle.*] How can you take hospitality of these hateful people!

LADY MERRY.

I never hate people so much I can't drink their champagne!
[*Lifts glass.*]

MERRY.

[*Taking glass.*] I forbid!

LADY MERRY.

[*Rising.*] Then let's go! [*They move to exit.*]

SERVANT.

[*At door, R.*] Your coach is not at hand, sir;—
but if you'll have the Vice-President's ——

MERRY.

Mr. Burr!

SERVANT.

Just entered, sir, and his carriage at your service!
[*Exit.*]

DOLLY.

[*Entering.*] Can't we persuade you take dinner?

MERRY.

Lady Merry's taken an ague.

[*LADY MERRY sneezes.*]

DOLLY.

So we heard! And it's thrown a chill on the
entire party. Before you go, then—[*raising glass*]
with the President.

MERRY.

[*Declining curtly.*] Thank you ——

DOLLY.

One glass—to your King!

[*MERRY is disconcerted for an instant;
starts to drink the toast, which is halted
by SERVANT at door.*]

SERVANT.

[*Announcing.*] Mr. Burr! [BURR enters.]

LADY MERRY.

[*With meaning.*] To yours, ma'am.

[*Sweeps across the room to exit.*]

BURR.

You're the first to go ?

LADY MERRY.

Yes—since we didn't go first !

BURR.

[*Laughing.*] I see! [*Sotto-voce to MERRY.*]
You have sacrificed an empire for a ceremony !

DOLLY.

[*To MERRY.*] Mr. Madison will join you in the
hall with Miss Ferrar.

MERRY.

[*With deep bow.*] Mrs. Todd —

[*SIR ANTHONY and LADY MERRY exit.*
Doors close quickly.]

BURR.

Thank heaven, still Mrs. Todd .

[*Kisses her hand, then retains it. They gaze
at each other in silence.*]

DOLLY.

[*Drawing hand away.*] Why are you here ?

BURR.

[*As if a matter of course.*] For my answer !

DOLLY.

You're in danger, sir—gravest danger !

Burr.

[*Smilingly.*] Madison? Is that my danger? In the wilds, where I've been, news is slow and uncertain. Somewhere I heard, vaguely—you were to marry. I turned back—rode night and day—to make sure it isn't true—though I never for a moment doubted you'd keep your word.

Dolly.

[*After pause.*] I told you, come for your answer after you'd met Hamilton—and, Ronnie, you gave me your word —

Burr.

[*Quickly, in half-whisper.*] And meant to keep it! What—happened—was accident. [DOLLY indicates gratification.] Hamilton's half-step forward—an untrue bullet—some fiendish mischance! You must have known.

Dolly.

[*Rather exultant.*] Yes! I knew you wouldn't fail that vow—willingly—unless blind with rage and hate —

Burr.

[*Quietly.*] There was none! Nor any thought—but you! I saw before me—only you—waiting my return. And when—that happened, the earth fell from under me. Courage left me—courage to face you! My wits failed me.

Dolly.

Yes, or you'd never have gone on that madman's errand!

BURR.

My one chance! A stroke quick and desperate—to win—out there—a new world—where I've come to take you!

DOLLY.

But, surely, you know what they're saying?

BURR.

[*Derisively and laughingly.*] That I plan treason, yes — [Angrily.] And Madison, of course —

DOLLY.

[*Breaking in.*] Not one word has he told me of what these Embassies ring with.

BURR.

But—in my absence—under clouds of distrust and calumny—he's tried—as he vowed he would! [DOLLY *gestures protest.*] Oh, no blame to him.—All's fair in — And he'd be more than human to refuse his advantage.

DOLLY.

You wrong him—and honor me too much! Mr. Madison has avoided me in your absence. He's forgotten his vow—save only at first—after the duel—when he quick offered his name as shield against gossip that flew thick and fast!

BURR.

[*Eagerly.*] And even so, you refused?

DOLLY.

What else—in honor—to him and you?

BURR.

No! You wouldn't marry for protection, and, thro' all, keep me here — [*Hand on heart.*]

DOLLY.

[*As if resisting the old fascination.*] You will not put such thoughts into my head —

BURR.

[*Insisting.*] The truth only! You'd be the unhappiest of women.

DOLLY.

[*Hands over ears.*] I'll not listen. I'll not —

BURR.

[*Drawing nearer.*] You can't shut out the truth! You belong with me. Your every heart-beat tells you so—now I'm by you!

[*Seizes her hand. Enter MADISON from hall-door R.*]

MADISON.

[*Startled on seeing BURR.*] Burr! [*Comes down.*] We thought you in the South! You've come, pray God, to set yourself right with the President!

BURR.

First of all, with you, sir, whose rare chivalry disdained advantage—that I couldn't have resisted—in rivalry such as ours. [*A slight pause.*] I once pledged you my eternal gratitude. But when put to the test of my life's happiness 'gainst yours, love ruled. And I took from her hand—and destroyed—a message that told you “yes.”

[*MADISON turns eagerly to DOLLY.*]

DOLLY.

[*To BURR.*] Is that the heart you saw beneath my Quaker kerchief? You who understand—a woman—best of all! [*To both.*] Come—happen what may—there must be always, 'twixt me and you two men, only faith complete—and candor. [*To MADISON.*] What I wrote thee, sir, that night he went to meet Hamilton was “no”! [*BURR startled.*] That was the message he took from my hand, as he went to face death—because of me. And I'm sure you divined it, sir.

MADISON.

Yes. [*Indicated, rather than spoken. Rather whimsical.*] I knew—he'd find a way—somehow—in that moment of his peril.

BURR.

[*Approaching DOLLY.*] And now—dare I hope that, now I stand in greater peril, you will answer him——

MADISON.

[*Intervening; with fire.*] No! I'll not take her answer now! I'll not risk all my life's hope in the balance with you—at this moment—when pity—so akin to love, may turn the scale against me. And you'd not have me!

BURR.

[*To DOLLY; with gesture of appeal.*] If pity alone will turn the scale to me, I'll not forego it.

MADISON.

And let her share the storm that to-morrow will

crash about you? Your arrest is certain. [BURR raises hand in protest.] Innocent or guilty, you must confront a tempest that may overwhelm you.

DOLLY.

[To MADISON.] And you no less, sir. [BURR is startled. To BURR.] Malice doesn't spare his name in all this! Whatever you plan—they say, you've nothing to fear from the State Department! That even—disloyalty—Mr. Madison will wink at—because of me!

BURR.

Who dares —— ?

MADISON.

Your ally—Merry—and all these foreigners.

BURR.

A word from me will show them their blunder—[ringing] and the President, too!

MADISON.

[Intervening.] Later—to-morrow!

BURR.

Now, at once! He must silence these calumnies. Prove to these foreigners, in the most decisive way possible, how far he discredits their inventions. [DE VAUX appears at door.] Announce the Vice-President. [DE VAUX exits. MADISON is obviously troubled.] 'Tis known that I am in Washington. Failure to show myself here to-night would be woefully misconstrued. [To DOLLY.] My arm, ma'am.

DOLLY.

[*To MADISON.*] And yours.

[*They move to door; DE VAUX confronts them.*]

DE VAUX.

The President regrets there's no place at table for Mr. Burr.

[*Exit DE VAUX. A brief but tense pause.*]

MADISON.

[*To BURR.*] I should have warned you—I might have known ——

DOLLY.

[*Between tears and anger.*] That this could happen—here! [*To BURR.*] And to you!

BURR.

[*With characteristic levity.*] And by only one vote!

DOLLY.

There's some mistake! He would not proclaim you—unheard, before all that world!

BURR.

[*Quietly.*] That I don't mind. [*With vehemence.*] But to humiliate me—in this fashion—before you! [*Swings to entrance; throws open the doors; bows, calls off.*] Messieurs et Mesdames! [*They come on: D'YRUJO well in front of the others. Some remain in entrance.*] My profound apologies for this rôle of spectre at the banquet! Hospitality is Mr. Jefferson's second religion. His table is his shrine, and I'd rather

have disturbed his devotions than his dinner-party. But the Second Office of the Nation [*indicating himself*] cannot forego this opportunity—the last, doubtless, as well as the first, in this house, to greet the Powers of Europe. And to beg you convey to your Sovereigns Colonel Burr's word-of-honor that his adventure in the South had no thought to take for himself one jot of his own country, but merely an empire of theirs! [*Bows to D'YRUJO.*] I shall be summoned, presently, to clear my name of the taint of treason. And though I marshal a myriad proofs of loyalty, I can conceive none so satisfying to myself, and those who know me, as this—my return to Washington—for but one purpose—not to defy my judges, nor cajole my foes, nor embarrass Mr. Jefferson, but only to implore this lady [*bending knee to DOLLY*] to become my wife. *Would I, I appeal to you, could I, or any man, ask so rare a creature to share a traitor's name?* [*Quietly.*] For this mad intrusion on your gayeties—forgive me—and—good-night! [*Bows profoundly. Exit.*]

CURTAIN

THE FOURTH ACT

SCENE.—*The library at SECRETARY MADISON'S.*

At the back, double doors lead to music-room. At the right, a door opens into the hall, where is seen the newel-post of descending stairs. Below the door is a French window heavily curtained. Mantel, with fireplace, at left of room scene. Door above, to MADISON'S study. The woodwork and bookcases are of dark fumed oak; the hangings of deep violet or purple. The furniture-coverings of violet or purple, but not of same shade as hangings; the frames of dull-tarnished gold. The wall-pictures are illuminant of the period. Conspicuous on the walls are parchment copies of portions of the Federal Constitution, and of the Magna Charta. On a chair, in corner, a banjo.

Cries of "Extra!" "Extra!" heard off, as from street, at rise of curtain and for some seconds before. MADISON, at desk, is reading letters with deep concern. He pauses from reading now and then, and listens as if to catch the street-cries.

JENNINGS.

[*At door.*] Mr. Pinckney!

[PINCKNEY enters.]

MADISON.

[*To PINCKNEY, indicating street-cries.*] What are they crying in the streets?

PINCKNEY.

It's an issue-extraordinary of the *National Gazette*. They print rumor that the Court at Richmond has refused to impeach Mr. Burr for treason.

MADISON.

[*Incredulous.*] President would have first news!

PINCKNEY.

He suspects a trick.—There's a British ship in the river, the same that brought those letters. [*Points to letters in MADISON'S hand.*] And this rumor may give Burr time to go aboard and flee the country.

MADISON.

If he only would! Would save us no end of trouble. [*Rises.*] Pinckney, we have no proof of treason—convincing proof!

PINCKNEY.

President is convinced—by all the circumstance.

MADISON.

Yes—but no proof of such overt act of treason as the Constitution means.

PINCKNEY.

[*Deferentially.*] You, of course, would know, sir.

MADISON.

[*Rather to himself.*] Yes—that, I'm sure, I wrote quite clear.

PINCKNEY.

[*Pointing to letters.*] But that he contemplated treason ——

MADISON.

[*Interrupting ; nodding assent.*] That appears certain from these letters of Merry to the King. And with the country so bitter toward England, they may count heavy against Burr.

PINCKNEY.

They will end him [*gesture of hangman's noose*], President says. And none too quickly !

MADISON.

There I'm not with him ! For the first time in life ! A nation—scarcely begun—to be hanging the Second Office—a popular idol—while Europe looks on and chuckles—bad business ! And I don't like it ! One, of course, shouldn't look a gift-horse in the mouth ; but this animal [*indicating letters*], I believe, is sent to bite our heads off ! Or kick up trouble of some sort—like the horse the Greeks gave to Troy ! When England turns kind to America —— [*Shakes his head as if distrustful.*]

PINCKNEY.

[*Persuadingly.*] Politics makes strange bed-fellows.

MADISON.

[*Unconvinced.*] Yes—but I can't imagine John

Bull and Thomas Jefferson in the same—
 [*Starts to replace letters in a portfolio.*] Return
 them to the President.

PINCKNEY.

They are to remain with you, sir. President
 thinks best.

MADISON.

[*Troubled.*] Best—for whom?

PINCKNEY.

He leaves that to your discretion—absolutely.

MADISON.

[*After pause, and dubiously.*] I realize the
 honor—and responsibility.

JENNINGS.

[*At door, announcing.*] The Vice-President.

BURR.

[*Entering; hesitating at threshold.*] Are you
 “at home”?

MADISON.

Why, of course!

BURR.

[*Coming down.*] The servant wasn't sure.—
 And over the way I couldn't see the President.

PINCKNEY.

[*Half apologetic.*] He's engaged with an at-
 taché of the British Legation.

BURR.

I went only because of this street rumor. I knew he'd be torn with anxiety, and flew to reassure him, at first hand, that I have been impeached—for treason.

MADISON.

[*Amazed.*] We've no word!

BURR.

I had; two hours since! Your courier rides bad horses. [*To PINCKNEY.*] Will you send word to the President? Because he'll have no peace till he sees me hanged!

PINCKNEY.

You wrong him, sir! At the worst, I know Mr. Jefferson would never see a Vice-President—hanged!

BURR.

[*With a smile.*] Shot, instead—eh?

PINCKNEY.

[*Bowing deeply.*] With all ceremony due your high office.

BURR.

[*Equally polite.*] My apologies to Mr. Jefferson—I didn't give him credit for such delicacy.

[*PINCKNEY starts to exit R.*]

MADISON.

From my study—you can send word.

[*PINCKNEY bows. Exit by door L.*]

BURR.

What a sin!

[*Sits at table.*]

MADISON.

Sin?

BURR.

Worse than sin, a blunder! To stop me—by this trumped-up charge—when he knows that out there they wait——

MADISON.

[*Interrupting; with deep feeling.*] Tell me, in sworn confidence between us two and the Almighty, what in hell did you have in mind—out there?

BURR.

[*Matter-of-fact tone.*] Mexico! To take Mexico from Spain.

MADISON.

And the Western States from us?

BURR.

[*Laughing.*] Surely, you don't believe ——

MADISON.

[*Insisting.*] Yes—or—no! And as you answer, I must answer—to the nation—and my conscience. Did you mean for the West to leave the Union?

BURR.

Damn it, man, no State can leave the Union. The United States is a nation, not a confederacy. [*Offers snuff-box.*] You gentlemen of the South never seem to realize that.

MADISON.

[*Suspecting evasion.*] Burr—you haven't answered me.

BURR.

[*After slight pause.*] Question Harry Clay, or Randolph, or Andrew Jackson—my guides and confidants at every step in this venture. Would *they* point a way to treason?

MADISON.

President says you fooled them.

BURR.

What! All three of them? What the devil does he think I am?

MADISON.

That's just what he thinks you are—the devil.

BURR.

But no one ever named me fool! And I'm not choosing to face a file of soldiers, blindfold, with Tom Jefferson so eager to give the signal!

[*In pantomime, drops handkerchief.*]

JENNINGS.

[*At door; back.*] Mrs. Todd, and some company, sir—in the music-room.

MADISON.

Beg Mrs. Todd step here. [JENNINGS *exits.*] I'd forgot for the moment. I've asked them in for a little music, and, maybe, a reel.

[*Enter DOLLY, from door, back. She has a small newspaper-bulletin, with conspicuous head-line: "Extraordinary."*]

DOLLY.

[*Startled on seeing BURR.*] You've brought the

good news! [*Hands bulletin to MADISON.*] I hoped to be the first.

BURR.

That bulletin isn't quite accurate.

DOLLY.

[*Looking from one to other.*] You mean —— ?

MADISON.

Colonel Burr's had later news, and not so good.

DOLLY.

[*Huskily.*] Oh—I'm so sorry! [*Eagerly.*] But are you sure ?

BURR.

Quite.

DOLLY.

As we came by your house there were throngs cheering and calling for you. [*To MADISON, and nodding toward music-room.*] We'll turn away, of course.

BURR.

Why? Quite informal, isn't it ?

DOLLY.

But music and dancing—at such a time!—They'll understand —— [*Turns to go.*]

MADISON.

No—no—couldn't happen better! There must be no sign of panic, or alarm—anywhere in the government. Contrary—bravest show possible. At least till we know for certain—I'll put them at ease. [*Exits to music-room.*]

DOLLY.

I was praying it was true—this rumor.

BURR.

'Twill come to the same, in the end. 'Til then, let nothing kill your faith in me, I entreat you! They may rake the country over—heavens above and the sea beneath—and not one scintilla of treason, in what I've done, or spoke, or *written*.

DOLLY.

Then the devil take the Englishman! He's done for you. *Writ* enough to hang you twice over! And they have all of it! Every line to his government, now in Jefferson's hands. The day you returned they reached him, while his guests were assembling for dinner. That's why he gave Merry an excuse to quarrel, and go. After your avowal to the company—your strange avowal of loyalty, he bade me remain, and questioned me—blunt—as an old friend might. Then read from Merry's letters to persuade me. I implored his sanction to tell you.

BURR.

[*With a twinkle.*] He agreed, of course!

DOLLY.

[*Gesture of "no."*] 'Twould warn you, he said, to flee the country.

BURR.

But he let you tell me?

DOLLY.

[*Quickly.*] I vowed you wouldn't, even if it were possible, *watched*, as you are, every moment.

BURR.

[*Eagerly.*] And to that—he replied?

DOLLY.

[*Quickly.*] Nothing! Except to remark the twinkling lights of a British ship, in the river, below the White House.

BURR.

[*With knowing smile.*] The fox!

DOLLY.

But I wouldn't take the hint. I wanted his leave—I insisted—definite leave—to put you on guard. Then he *roared*: “No!” “No!” For when 'twas known, as surely would be, that you'd fled arrest, thro' word from me, the blame, he said, would fall on Mr. Madison. 'Gainst that argument I could offer nothing—except tears. [*Touches her eyes. Lapses into brogue.*] Whereat he lost patience completely. Swore all women were wax in the hands of rogues; that every drop of ink from Merry's quill he'll use for a gun-wad; that I might tell you straight—if I chose—and he'd double the watch on you!

BURR.

[*Laughing.*] No need! I've already assured him. [*Tenderly.*] But such proof of your devotion—to a friend—'gainst every counsel of prudence and wisdom—'tis worth a charge of treason!

JENNINGS.

[*At door.*] The British Minister!

DOLLY.

Apprise Mr. Madison.

[*Nods toward music-room.* JENNINGS
makes to cross.

BURR.

I'll have word, first, with Sir Anthony.

[*Makes to exit R.*

JENNINGS.

He's brought a lady, sir.

[*Exit JENNINGS to music-room. Enter SIR
ANTHONY.*

DOLLY.

[*Cordially.*] Lady Merry's with you?

MERRY.

No, she's not yet rid of her ague.

DOLLY.

[*With show of sympathy.*] Poor dear! Still
sneezing?

[*Enter MADISON. Advances with out-
stretched hand to welcome MERRY. JEN-
NINGS follows, crosses to R.*

MERRY.

[*Freezingly.*] My visit is purely official. Miss
Ferrar begged to attend me, through mistrust of
my temper. She waits below.

DOLLY.

[*To JENNINGS.*] Show Miss Ferrar to the music-room. [*To MERRY.*] There's a small company to-night. [*Exits to music-room.*]

MERRY.

[*To MADISON.*] Your Chief summoned me, urgent, a while ago, for conference. I sent to ask the purpose of the—*pow-wow*—but he refers me to you. [*Pompously.*] Declines to treat with my attaché.

MADISON.

If the matter be urgent, do you wonder, sir?

MERRY.

[*Angrily.*] I wonder more that he expects me ever set foot in his—*wigwam*—after the day I went to dine—and didn't!

MADISON.

He may wish to explain ——

MERRY.

He can't explain. He has in mind, I presume, an *apology*, which he may communicate through the medium of the State Department.

MADISON.

I'll advise his secretary. He's in the house.

[*Exits to study.*]

BURR.

[*Lightly.*] You exaggerate, I'm sure, the importance of this summons. Mr. Jefferson has in mind nothing more serious than [*tensely*] your notes to the King, regarding me.

MERRY.

[*Staggered.*] W-what!

BURR.

They have copies.

MERRY.

Impossible! I kept no copies. I wouldn't trust them about me—with his spies everywhere.

BURR.

Then how'd they come by your dispatches?

MERRY.

[*Excitedly.*] Stole them, of course. That's why we've had no reply. They never reached the King.

BURR.

[*Incredulous.*] Stole them—from your courier?

MERRY.

From the post. I sent them by *post*.

BURR.

[*Amazed.*] You—entrusted—such—communications to the post?

MERRY.

A Minister's letters are sacred, in any civilized country. And could I, for a moment, think ——?

BURR.

[*Interrupting; quietly.*] No, you couldn't—think anything—[*bitingly*] more vital than a point of dinner etiquette! [*Crosses, threateningly.*] Of all bunglers, you are ——

MERRY.

[*Drawing up to full height.*] His Majesty's Minister!

BURR.

[*Recovering his calm.*] Thank you for reminding me. I was about to lose my temper, and descend to violent speech. [*With quavering voice.*] But the provocation! Think of it! An Empire inviting to enter—advancing to greet me. My position, fortune, friends, life, even—all staked, and lost—for a trifle—unguarded letters—an imprudence, damn it!—that would shame a school-girl. Why, sir, had you planned to destroy me, cunningly, in cold blood, I'd bear it with more complaisance than such superhuman stupidity!

[*A pause.*]

MERRY.

Less stupid than you think for! [*Crosses to door of study. Calls.*] Mr. Madison! [*Comes down.*] Diplomacy always anticipates such emergencies. [*Enter MADISON.*] I demand audience with your Chief.

MADISON.

Certainly. I'll arrange, for to-morrow.

MERRY.

To-night! Now! I want—from his hands—all my correspondence that relates to Mr. Burr.

MADISON.

To what end?

MERRY.

That is for me to determine.

MADISON.

[*Appeasingly.*] We'd prefer to keep this a family quarrel —

MERRY.

[*With touch of impudence.*] You doubtless would, sir! But my king's interests compel me to disregard your personal feelings. Mr. Jefferson must surrender my dispatches.

MADISON.

[*Sharply.*] He won't! I warn you, sir!

MERRY.

Then—the alternative. And with no delay!

MADISON.

You'll not be kept waiting! [*Exit to study.*]

BURR.

[*To MERRY.*] If the President grant your demand, you couldn't make public these letters?

MERRY.

I owe it to my Sovereign, and to the high place in which I stand for him. I must show the Chancelleries of Europe what they have to deal with, in this barbarian who invades the sanctity of diplomatic correspondence. As for the effect on *you*, sir—well, the event will justify what I wrote the King of your influence with Mr. Madison.

[*DOLLY appears at door back.*]

BURR.

Surely, you haven't dragged in — ?

MERRY.

[*Interrupting.*] “Great ventures can’t stop for small morals!”

DOLLY.

[*Coming down.*] “Small morals,” sir, to hold up the great Mr. Madison for knave or fool? To put in doubt his faith to a people that worship him!—You’d make his honor serve the ends of dishonor—and call that “small morals”?

MERRY.

[*With deep bow.*] My king’s interest above everything!

DOLLY.

[*With mingled temper and tears.*] But I venture to doubt that “the first gentleman of Europe,” as you call your king, will countenance diplomacy that makes war on a woman! [*indicating herself*] and that, too, in the secret way that leaves her defenseless; that stamps upon her name, in the records of state, a slur and suspicion that time will only deepen.

[*Half turns away. Moves slightly up stage.*]

BURR.

[*To MERRY, threateningly.*] I forbade you—pledged you not to—by name or hint! You shall answer to me!

MERRY.

[*Accepting the challenge.*] At your service, sir!

DOLLY.

[*Intervening quickly.*] No, no!

[*Moves up stage with BURR. BURR exits into music-room. Reënter MADISON, followed by PINCKNEY.*

MADISON.

[*Handing MERRY a document.*] Your reply, sir.

MERRY.

[*Reading superscription.*] "Anthony Merry, Esq."—Omitting my official titles!—I'll not accept. [*Throws packet on table.*

MADISON.

The contents explain.

MERRY.

[*Impatiently and imperiously.*] I demanded—audience!

MADISON.

President will receive you at your earliest convenience—[*MERRY triumphant*] in audience-of-leave.

MERRY.

[*Taken aback.*] But I asked no such audience!

MADISON.

President assumes that you will be eager to hasten your departure—now you've resigned as Minister here.

MERRY.

[*Beginning to see.*] I'm not aware—His Majesty has received my resignation.

MADISON.

Then His Majesty must *anticipate* it.

MERRY.

[*Angrily.*] You presume to speak for the king?

MADISON.

[*Taking up quickly.*] He is unwilling, I'm sure, to be represented by a gentleman who so lightly appreciates the hospitality of a friendly people, and mistakes tolerance for timidity. Your passports, Sir Anthony! [*Offers them.*]

MERRY.

[*Refusing them.*] Take care, sir! You are not prepared for war with England!

MADISON.

[*Mildly.*] We never are prepared, sir, but always ready.

MERRY.

[*Breathless with rage.*] When the King learns—his Minister's letters—stolen from the post.

MADISON.

No such thing could happen here. They come from England—your letters—to pave the way for your successor, Lord Erskine.

MERRY.

[*Bewildered.*] I'll not believe my ears.

MADISON.

Your eyes, then.

[*Takes up packet of letters from desk.*]

MERRY.

[*After glance at it.*] The Royal Seal!

MADISON.

From the king—they come—to prove he is well
with us—treats in good faith —

MERRY.

[*Looking into space.*] I—I'd have sworn they
were — [Turns to MADISON.] And—I beg
your pardon! [*Bows. Suddenly.*] Though I
believe Mr. Jefferson quite capable of what I sus-
pected!

JENNINGS.

[*Announcing.*] Lady Merry!

LADY MERRY.

[*Entering flurried, in time to overhear last of
MERRY'S speech.*] Tony, what's this they say at
the Embassy? [MERRY holds up passports for
her to see. LADY MERRY is bewildered.] We're
going home? [MERRY, too overcome to speak,
nods "yes." LADY MERRY explosively continues.]
Thank God!

MERRY.

[*To quiet her.*] Angela!

LADY MERRY.

[*Fervidly and with quavering voice.*] Yes,
thank God, we're going! Though it be in dis-
grace, in chains, anything—so we leave this cruel,
brutish country!

[*Falls into chair, sobbing bitterly.* ENA
enters hurriedly from music-room.

MERRY.

You will pardon Lady Merry's outburst —

DOLLY.

[*With feeling.*] We quite understand, sir. Some things here must have been a trial to Lady Merry. Our ways are not quite your ways, and, I'm sure, as time goes on, and we look back on these little differences, we'll all be sorry.

LADY MERRY.

[*Rising quickly; recovering herself and explosively.*] Sorry?—To leave these Mohocks!
[*Starts to go.*] Come, Ena!

ENA.

[*To DOLLY.*] Au 'voir, ma'am!

LADY MERRY.

[*Correcting her, sharply.*] "Au 'voir," indeed!

ENA.

[*Timidly.*] I hope to see Mrs. Todd often.

LADY MERRY.

We leave to-morrow, by God's grace—and first coach!

ENA.

I've promised Mr. Pinckney to remain.

LADY MERRY.

[*Wildly.*] Ena, have you lost your *head*?

ENA.

[*Huskily.*] Goes with the rest!

LADY MERRY.

[*Tearfully.*] How'd that happen! [*Viciously.*]
To that — [*Moves toward* PINCKNEY.

ENA.

[*With spirit, stopping her.*] Don't, Angie.
[*Plaintively.*] Please don't! He's not one
of the things you were going to say. And if he
were—all of them — [*Crosses to* PINCKNEY.

LADY MERRY.

[*Intervening.*] Never! Leave you here?

ENA.

[*Quickly.*] Not for long, dear. We're going
to our London Legation—First Secretary, when
Tony's successor arrives.

LADY MERRY.

There'll be none!

MERRY.

[*Nodding "yes."*] Lord Erskine.

LADY MERRY.

[*To DOLLY.*] His wife's American!

DOLLY.

Miss Cadwalader, of Philadelphia.

LADY MERRY.

[*To DOLLY.*] A friend? [*DOLLY nods "yes."*]
I see—I — Hell's bales! [*To MERRY.*] And
you—you—played into the hands of these —

ENA.

[*Calming her, and nodding toward music-room.*]
Angie, they'll hear —

DOLLY.

[*With show of sympathy.*] Let them! I'm sure Lady Merry's tired of being diplomatic—stifling her feelings—choosing her words. Say what you like, ma'am, for once in your life. 'Twill do you good! [BURR enters.]

LADY MERRY.

[*Through her tears.*] Thank you! That's the first kindness we've known here—except our passports. [*Picks them up from table. To BURR.*] For these we're indebted to you, and I forgive you everything, and—I [*viciously*] hope you'll live to be hanged!

BURR.

[*Offering his arm.*] Till then, at your service. [*She is about to take BURR'S arm.*]

MERRY.

[*Sharply.*] Mr. Pinckney! [*Motions PINCKNEY to take out LADY MERRY and ENA. BURR, after profound bow, moves up stage. To DOLLY.*] Sans rancune?

DOLLY.

Not the least! All in a day's work! And before you leave you must honor me at dinner.

[MADISON is disconcerted.]

MERRY.

[*With meaning, and a smile.*] Thanks, but there won't be time, I anticipate. [*To MADISON.*] Your Chief has put on you a duty you will some day regret.

MADISON.

I regret most, sir, the duty you put on me—in my own house!

[MERRY bows and exits. MADISON goes to desk; takes up MERRY'S letters; then sits and writes.

BURR.

[Coming down to DOLLY.] 'Twas kind to ask them to dinner—but suppose they'd accepted?

DOLLY.

I anticipated they wouldn't! [To JENNINGS at door.] Send word to the President they've taken leave. And Mrs. Todd begs he'll bring his fiddle. [JENNINGS exits

BURR.

[To MADISON, indicating letters.] And what of those? Will Jefferson use them against me?

MADISON.

'Tis out of his hands! He leaves the State Department to determine.

BURR.

[Joyously.] Then I'll coach to Richmond with a light heart. [Bows as if to exit. Stops at sound of music off; it is same tune, the waltz, heard in Act II. To DOLLY.] That dance—you remember? [Takes up banjo from chair; strikes chords.

DOLLY.

[Same tone as in Act II.] One—two—three.

BURR.

[*Offering arm.*] What say, ma'am?
[DOLLY is disconcerted.]

MADISON.

[*Intervening.*] Your ankle up to it, ma'am?

DOLLY.

[*Taking the hint.*] It's never been the same—since—that slip on the ice.

[*Through the open windows is heard the measured "tramp" of soldiers; then the drum-roll—or bugle-call—that signals "halt!"*]

JENNINGS.

[*At door.*] Captain Gadsby inquires for Colonel Burr.

BURR.

[*Uncertain.*] Gadsby?

MADISON.

President's Marshal.

BURR.

That means—of course—my arrest? [MADISON *nods assent.* To DOLLY.] And I lose my dance with you! [To JENNINGS.] Alone?

JENNINGS.

Some army, sir—six or eight.

BURR.

Pomp and circumstance!

MADISON.

[*Going to door of study.*] Show the Captain here.

DOLLY.

[*Stopping* JENNINGS.] One moment! [*To* MADISON.] If you please — [*To* JENNINGS.] Call Colonel Burr's carriage. Beg Captain Gadsby drive to his house. Colonel Burr will join him there. [*Exit* JENNINGS. DOLLY, *to* MADISON.] Not under your roof, the arrest! President might have thought of that.

BURR.

Break up another party!

MADISON.

[*With emotion.*] Great God, man, at such a moment you can *jest*?

BURR.

What else?—Excuses?—Regrets?—I hate them—both. This game was of my own making. I cut the cards, dealt them, named the stake. [*Looking at* DOLLY.] And well worth playing for!—If I must lose —

DOLLY.

[*Interrupting.*] You'll bear it as bravely, I know, as you'd have borne the honors.

JENNINGS.

[*At door, to* DOLLY.] The Marshal will do as you bid, ma'am; but leaves the soldiers here.

MADISON.

Give them some refreshments.

JENNINGS.

Ale or wine, sir?

DOLLY.

[*Sotto-voce.*] Lemonade!

MADISON.

[*To JENNINGS.*] Or ginger-pop!

DOLLY.

[*Calling after.*] Nothing stronger! [*Exit JENNINGS. To MADISON.*] Or folks will say you plied 'em with drink to help him escape.

MADISON.

Yes—I'd best reassure the Marshal — [*Exit.*

BURR.

[*Calling after.*] And Mr. Jefferson's army!
[*Going to window, looks out, laughing.*] Six or eight! There he stands at the White House window, [*to DOLLY*] waiting to see me fly down Pennsylvania Avenue pursued by his army. He has no sense of humor!

DOLLY.

Where was yours—in all this? [*Tone of impatience.*] Your sense of humor—that found something of fun in the fiercest tirade against you—that laughed down mountains of abuse raised by your enemies. That glorious sense of humor that so often saved you from the tragedy of your *follies*—where was it when you set about this ridiculous enterprise?

BURR.

[*Piqued.*] At least not ridiculous!

DOLLY.

Yes—most absurd and fantastic—since Don Quixote and the windmills. [*Mockingly.*] You! —the careless, cynical Burr, who played with high politics as a child plays with toys—who let the Presidency go with a jest, when a sober word would win it—who never took anything seriously but his love-affairs—the beau, the gallant, heart-breaking Burr—[*in tone and gesture of mock heroics*] sets forth on the conquest of Mexico and the throne of the Montezumas! [*With quick swerve of tone.*] And you don't see the humor of it. [*Laughs.*]

BURR.

[*Same spirit; laughing.*] Now that you put it that way! [*Glowing.*] And yet—we'd have made it Paradise! It's a land of sun and color, dancing and music, care-free, romantic. [*Advances to DOLLY. She draws away as he approaches.*] And there I planned—or dreamed—a life splendid and dazzling—to blind you to everything in the world but me—make you forget all the world but me.

DOLLY.

The world's esteem—and good report?

BURR.

There we come to small morals! I gave no thought to them. Nor anything but just you!

DOLLY.

[*Brokenly.*] Don't let me believe I brought you to this! Think what a memory, if from a

great love such wretchedness and shame should come to you!

BURR.

[*Seriously and with feeling.*] Your solicitude for me—your anxiety, so frank and sincere—touches me profoundly—more than I can tell you, and more than you'd believe. I'm called a vain man and, perhaps, justly. And yet, curious enough, there are so few persons in the world for whose good opinion and affection I ever gave a second thought. Now—in this moment of crisis and peril I think of but—you! Come what may, I know you will think of me, always, with the perfect understanding that lifts gentle womanhood to the plane of angels. And if—Fates forbid—it comes to the worst——

DOLLY.

[*In alarm.*] It won't—and can't! Mr. Madison will prevent!

BURR.

[*With characteristic levity and cynical gaiety.*] He's only human, and with me out of the way—well, if it happens—my friends shall have due notice of time and place. And I promise, as the showman says, “a great concourse of company, much gaiety and a rare sight”—[*with burst of laughter*] a Vice-President shot for getting bored with the office! [*Looking at her closely as she touches her eyes.*] Oh!—but you're—— I beg your pardon. But I couldn't know you'd take me serious. You never have! Forgive me, I implore you,—and yet, in candor, the tears that

glisten in your eyes I'd rather have won than the jewelled crown of Mexico! *Au 'voir*, dear lady. [*Lower tone.*] Till we meet again, may God Almighty bless you!

[*Moves as if to take her in his arms.*

DOLLY.

[*Turning from him with gasp of surprise.*] Good-bye! [*Extends hand in gesture of dismissal.*

BURR.

[*Taking her hand; in tone of challenge.*] You don't mean that!

DOLLY.

[*With cold, steady tone of decision.*] Yes.

BURR.

[*Insisting, with almost impudence; smiles as he kisses her hand and looks up at her.*] I'll wait word from you—after the trial at Richmond.

[*Goes to door, where he pauses, as if for her assent, and blows kisses. DOLLY shakes her head "no"; her smile and bearing say "That's over." BURR exits with look and manner that indicate assurance that it is not the end of the story.*

DOLLY.

[*Alone.*] Good-bye. [*Puts hand to lips, as if to throw kisses; lets hand fall quickly, as if suddenly recalled to herself.*] You poor—great—splendid—wretched man!

[*Puts hands to eyes as if dazed and striving to throw off the fascination. Bursts into tears. MADISON enters.*

MADISON.

Why! What's wrong here? What did he say to you?

DOLLY.

[*Faintly.*] "Good-bye!"

MADISON.

[*Looking at her closely.*] Tears? He doesn't deserve them.

DOLLY.

And so I weep for him!

MADISON.

[*Tenderly.*] That's the Quaker of you!

DOLLY.

No—just the woman! Rogues always get our pity.

MADISON.

He'll need it! [*Shouts heard from street; and drums and fifes. MADISON points off.*] You hear that? A mob *jeering* him—and "The Rogues' March"! He hasn't a friend in the world!

DOLLY.

[*Boldly. Crosses to window; shuts it.*] Yes, he has! I am his friend—whatever wrong he's done—and you, too, are his friend.

MADISON.

[*Deprecatingly.*] I?

DOLLY.

You must be—just as *I* must be—because, sir, he's the best friend we ever had! Why, man,

but for him I might be a spindly, Philadelphia widow, taking lodgers in South Fourth Street——
 [MADISON *makes gesture of protest.*] Don't wince, sir; 'tis the truth! And you'd be mooning still over that Long Island hussy who jilted you for a parson and his forte-pianer!

MADISON.

[*With a half smile.*] He's been simply the agent of Providence, or Fate.

DOLLY.

Whosever agent he was, he did the work devilish well! [*Looks off, pityingly.*] Out of his very evil, good comes to you! Over the ruins of his career you step to higher things.—And 'tis hard that *you*, of all men, must hold the proof that damns him!

MADISON.

Have no fear on that score. [*Gives her the portfolio.*] At least, for the present.

DOLLY.

[*Reading.*] “Confidential Communications from His Majesty, George III. Not to be opened for one hundred years.”—And you mean ——

MADISON.

Without those, they'll never convict him—of treason.

DOLLY.

And you'd have him go free?

MADISON.

[*Nodding "yes."*] I think it best—for the nation.

DOLLY.

And for—me?

MADISON.

[*With a slight shrug.*] You couldn't share a "traitor's" name.

DOLLY.

[*With the brogue.*] Lord, man, must I knock you on the head?—I feared so, from the first.

MADISON.

[*Triumphant.*] I meant you should! But while he was near——

DOLLY.

[*Taking up quickly.*] Ah, don't try to follow the twists and turns of a woman's heart! And don't question a woman—ever! If she loves you there's nothing to tell, and if she doesn't love you she'll tell you nothing. I'm no saint, sir,—but thee may take me for wife! And, with God's help, thee'll have no cause to regret it. All that a great love can do to make thy life happy, I promise absolutely.

JENNINGS.

[*At door. He carries violin case.*] The President's driving in, sir. And sent his fiddle, ma'am.

MADISON.

[*To DOLLY.*] Shall we receive him here?

DOLLY.

No, no—the music-room. And, Jennings, take the banjo. [JENNINGS *exits to music-room.* From the hall below, and rather distantly, a voice is heard announcing: “The President!” which is repeated somewhat nearer at hand. From the music-room comes a tuneful march, in lively tempo, and the murmur of many persons chatting and laughing. MADISON is leaning at table, in attitude of deep thought. DOLLY crosses to him.]
Buck up, Jim!

MADISON.

[*With a start.*] Yes, yes—I was just thinking.

DOLLY.

[*Nodding toward music-room.*] This gaiety—to-night? 'Tis wicked, I know, and worldly and selfish and—and—human. But, after all, I'm only a woman, and thee my—husband!

MADISON.

[*Arms about her.*] And after us, the deluge! as the French King said.

DOLLY.

He didn't say it first. 'Twas Noah's wife—once she had him safe in the Ark.

CURTAIN





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